ONCE UPON A TIME TALES

MARY STEWART

Franklin

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ONCE UPON A TIME TALES

By THE SAME AUTHOR

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They all flew in at the palace window one bright morning and settled in a circle around the King. (page 34)

ONCE · UPON · A · TIME

• TALES •

BY · MARY · STEWART

AUTHOR · OF
"TELL · ME · A · TRUE · STORY"

WITH · AN · INTRODUCTION · BY
HENRY · VAN · DYKE
AND · ILLUSTRATED · BY
GRISELDA · M · McCLURE

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To TOMMY

the littlest lad who listened, with the hope that some time he also will become a Flute Player

THE WAY TO ONCE UPON A TIME

BY

HENRY VAN DYKE

"ONCE upon a time," began the little girl, with sparkling eyes,—then she stopped, her voice went out like an electric light when you push the black button in, and a puzzled look came into her face. It was plain that the current of her story had been turned off; it was not shining clear in her mind; she was thinking of something else.

Now you know it is a very good rule, when a person is making a speech, or telling a story, or playing a piece on the piano, and suddenly stops,—like that ! ?—it is a very good rule, if you are listening, to keep perfectly quiet and wait. It is not polite to cough, or laugh, or make a noise with your feet on the floor. It is very impolite to whistle, or call out, "Next!" The best thing to do is to be still, and sympathetic, and attentive, and ready for what is coming,—just as you would like people to behave if you

were trying to make a real speech to them or to tell them a good story. It may be that you have forgotten something, and you need a little minute to remember it. Or it may be that a new thought has darted through your mind, like a runner in a game of cross-tag, and you must have a chance to turn around and follow it.

So I waited for the little girl to find out what had run across her story. But she was silent so long, and the wrinkle on her forehead grew so deep, that at last I tried very gently to help her a little.

"Once upon a time,—and when was that?"

"I don't know," she answered, "and that's just the trouble. Our teacher always tells us we ought not to use words unless we know *ezackly* what they mean."

"That is a hard rule," said I, "and there would not be much talking if everybody obeyed it strictly. But what is the matter with 'once upon a time'? It ought to be easy to understand, because it is all made up of little words."

"But sometimes the littlest words are the

very worst," said she,—"like *ken*, and *fen*, and *tren*, in the old spelling-book. You can spell them fast enough, of course; but I don't believe you know what a *tren* is, yourself."

"You have me there, dearest," I confessed, "and what is more, I don't feel any great need of finding out. There are some pretty tough, useless little words in the spelling-book. But those that you used just now, when you began your story, were not only short, they also sounded simple. They were just plain every-day words."

"But sometimes," said she, shaking her golden curls, "the very most every-day ones are the hardest. As long as you don't try to 'splain them they seem as easy as anything; but when you ask *ezackly* what they mean, you can't tell. They just fade away, and you get all mixed up in your mind, like Alice in Wonderland."

"That is certainly true," I nodded. "One of the queerest things about words is the way they run around and slip through your fingers when you try to catch them. For instance, I know what I feel when I say, 'I

love you'; yet it would be very hard to explain just what it means. But let us see if we can't help each other to catch these words of yours. We will run them down into a corner like chickens in the yard, and hold them long enough to find out a little of their meaning. There are four of them. Let us begin with the smallest. What is it?"

She thought for a moment, her eyes brightening, and then she rattled off her answer.

"*A*, or *an*,—'ndefinite art'cle, used before nouns to d'note one of a class or number, 'thout specify'ng it."

"Does that mean without picking it out?" I asked. "Just any of the class?"

She nodded.

"Well, that word is a very little chicken, and he can't tell us much. Let us try the next word,—a bigger one,—*time*. What is that?"

"Noun," she answered glibly; "name of a person or thing."

"I should think it might make a good deal of difference whether it was a person, or a thing. Which do you suppose it is?"

She shook her head, as if this puzzled her.

"Well," said I, "there is old Father Time, —you remember him, with the long gray beard, and the hour-glass, and the scythe over his shoulder? He is a person. But he can't be It; for he is not 'one of a class or number'; there is only one of him. Then there is day-time and night-time, and school-time and play-time, and winter-time and summer-time, and a whole lot of other little times. It might be one of them."

The sparkle came back into the little girl's eyes. She was after the new idea which had played cross-tag in her mind.

"Oh," she cried, "I see it now. All those little Times are old Father Time's children. He just goes marching on very quietly, with slow steps, and long steps; and all the little Times go running after him, and dancing 'round him, and picking flowers and building snow-forts; and sometimes they carry loads of useful things, and often they do a lot of mischief; but they have to follow old Father Time, for he keeps on all the time, just marching."

"Is that all he does? I should think that

would be very stupid. He must be a lazy old fellow to do nothing but walk through like a tramp. Has he no useful work? He ought to be ashamed of himself, with the little Times so busy around him."

"Oh, no," she replied quickly, "he is not lazy. Think how hard it must be for him to walk such a long way. And then he measures everything as he goes. He tells just how far it is from the beginning to the end of a thing, and how far to the beginning of the next thing, so that things don't get tangled. Besides, he has plenty of work and trouble with the little Times,—they are so naughty,—they want to stay when they ought to go,—and they are in a hurry to go when they ought to stay. So old Father Time has to keep them in some kind of order. He says, 'Now, Summer, your time is up,—you fade away! Winter, you come along!' Or he calls out, 'School, you've had all the time that belongs to you; you must let Play have the rest of it.' Or he tucks Day away to sleep in the pack-basket on his back, and lets Night out to run among the stars. He

never forgets any of his children; and they all have to mind him and come after him; for if any of them went in front of their father it would be *Kriss-Kross-Katch-Me-Krout!* They would vanish into the air."

"But, dearest, they are only in the air, anyhow. You never saw any of them,—not a little Time, nor a big Time, nor old Father Time himself. How do you know they are there?"

"Why, of course," she answered gravely, "I only *think* they are there. But when I think that way, things happen that make me believe it must be right. The darkness comes after the sun goes down, and the snow falls when the flowers are gone, and ten-years-old follows five-years-old,—doesn't it really happen that way? And doesn't that prove that old Time and all the little Times must be there?"

"Very good, my Goldilocks, but suppose that there was a time when nothing at all happened in the world. Where would your Times be then? What would you think of that?"

She puckered her forehead and shook her curls again. Then she laughed.

"Why, I s'pose then there would be nothing for anybody to think about! Besides, if *that* happened, you see it would be something, after all; and so old Father Time would have to measure how far it was from the place where Nothing happened to the place where Something began again. And of course, when he measures, his little Times must go with him."

"Tell me how he measures, beloved, for I don't quite understand that part of it."

"Oh, it is not so very hard," she answered. "You see he has a lot of measures, and they all have wings. The big ones are called Years, and they are as large as eagles. The next size are called Months, and they are like owls. The Weeks are like doves; the Days are like robins and larks; the Hours are about the size of humming-birds and the Minutes are no bigger than butterflies. All these measures fly along with Time, and they mark off the distance as he marches on. Then, you see, he notches it on the handle of his scythe."

"I should think they would get very tired, working so hard, and flying so far."

"They do," said Goldilocks; "they get very tired indeed. Especially the smaller ones, from the size of doves down to the size of butterflies. Sometimes they get so tired that they can't go on measuring any longer. Then they must rest. So they fly up on the shoulders of the little Times, or on the pack of old Father Time himself, and they are carried along, but they don't do any measuring then at all. It is the funniest thing to see all these measures, like doves and larks and robins and humming-birds and butterflies, sitting on the shoulders of the big and little Times, as they go running and tramping along. I saw a Dove-Week once, upon a Time ——"

"Stop, dearest," I cried. "Don't you see that you have just spoken the four magic words and showed us what they mean?"

"No," she answered, with an air of surprise, "I haven't said anything about the words. What is it?"

"Once-upon-a-time!" said I. "That was

when you saw the Dove-Week fly up on the shoulder of the moving Time, and there was no measuring of how long it takes to go from one Saturday to another Saturday. Once-upon-a-time does not mean now, or yesterday, or to-morrow, or long-ago, or after-a-great-while. It means something in between them all, and running along with them all, like a river underground, or a current of air overhead,—but something that has no milestones and no boundaries, so that you can't tell exactly where it begins or where it ends. Once-upon-a-time is when old Father Time and the little Times go marching on, but the winged measures forget to mark the steps of the journey. Once-upon-a-time is when a palace is built while you blow a whistle, when a bean-stalk grows to the sky while you are putting the seed into the ground, when you step on one end of a rug in New York and off the other end in Damascus. Once-upon-a-time is when birds and flowers tell you what they mean before you have ever studied their history or their language. Once-upon-a-time is when you dream things that bring you

beautiful messages from a far country. Once-upon-a-time is when all the fairy-tales happen. In every country, no matter whether it is new or old, and in every life, no matter whether it is grand or simple, if we will only have it so, we can see and hear wonderful things in Once-upon-a-time. Go on with your story, sweetheart!"

So the little girl looked at me with a puzzled look again, as if she understood a part of my talk, but not all; and she went on with her story; and it was a lovely one, with a good-natured Bear and a generous Princess in it.

Then the little girl grew up (in about six days, as it seemed to me), and became a woman who did a great deal of good work and tried to make people around her happier. But she never forgot how to be a child, and though her life was very busy, she always knew the way to Once-upon-a-time. That was how she found these stories.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

Avalon,
May 31, 1912.

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I

HOW THE SHEPHERD TOLD THEM

ONCE upon a time, in a tiny hut on a hillside, there lived a shepherd. I cannot tell you whether he was young or old, rich or poor. For sometimes when folks saw him crossing the meadows, his gray cloak wrapped about him, his head bent before the wind, he seemed very, very old. And at other times, when he led his flock up the hillside in the dawn, his head raised to meet the golden light of the rising sun, he looked like the youngest, strongest, most joyful youth in the world.

Also, as I said before, I cannot tell you whether he was rich or poor. For although his gray cloak was old and worn, folks sometimes caught glimmers beneath it, as if a golden belt or a jewelled chain lay hidden within its folds.

All the children who lived near knew and

loved this shepherd and often the grown folks questioned them about their friend.

"Is he a young man?" they would ask, "or is he very old? Is he as poor as his cloak looks, or does he wear a prince's armour beneath his mantle?"

But the children always answered, "Don't you see, can't you understand? He is neither young nor old, rich nor poor; he is a flute-player!"

Then through the air would float the soft, sweet notes of the flute the shepherd carried, and with which he called his sheep. Sometimes the music was clear and piercing, sometimes it was soft and tender, but always the sheep answered it, and always, when a certain tune was played, the children answered it too. It did not matter what they were doing; in storm or sunshine, summer or winter, when that strange, sweet little air echoed through the hills the children scampered like sheep to the shepherd, and crowded around him.

Sometimes they would stay with him for hours, sitting upon the soft grass at his feet,

or perched upon the surrounding rocks. The grown folks wondered how he kept them so quiet, for the noisiest, most restless child would sit as still as a little mouse while the shepherd talked.

But did he talk? Sometimes he would breathe into the flute again, and other notes would come drifting down to those at work in the valley below. They were like bird notes, the shrill whistle of the blue jay, the soft thrill of the song-sparrow, the deep, sweet call of the wood-thrush.

Each bird answered his own call, and flew to the gray-cloaked shepherd as he sat surrounded by children, and then—well, nobody knew what happened then, whether the birds sang songs which the children understood, or whether the flute-player told the stories.

But years afterwards one of the children, a little lame lad whom the shepherd had often carried on his shoulder, told other and younger children these Shepherd's Tales. He was a tall youth by that time, but he was too lame to go out into the world and seek his fortune. So he stayed in the little village

at the foot of the hill, and collected the children around him, just as the flute-player had done.

For the shepherd had vanished, no one knew where, except perhaps the lame lad, and he would not tell. When questioned he only answered, "The shepherd's magic flute is never silent. It is calling to the flocks, the birds, and the children always; and far and wide they are listening for its music and following its call."

II

THE BLUE JAY'S STORY

"HEIGH-HO! Heigh-ho!" whistled a blue jay in answer to the shepherd's flute, and with a flash of his splendid blue wings he flew across the hillside and lit upon the shepherd's shoulder. Then with his crested head on one side he faced the crowd of eager children and began his harsh chatter. "Jay, jay. I'm the robber bird," he cried hoarsely.

"Yes, indeed, we all know that," answered the shepherd; "you drive other birds off with your thieving ways and steal their nests. But tell us how you learnt these bad manners and this noisy call."

So the blue jay told his story; perhaps the children understood his language, or perhaps the flute-player told them what the bird notes meant. I do not know. I only know that this is the tale the lame lad learnt while he

cuddled close to the gray-cloaked shepherd, so many years ago.

There was once a great mountain whose top was hidden among the clouds; its sides were so steep that no one could stand straight upon them without falling off, and it was covered with big thorn trees growing close together. Princes and barons, blacksmiths and farmers, had broken their swords and axes, their anvils and their plows, trying to force a way through the deep and cruel forest, and had turned back worn out with weariness and discouragement. For after they had travelled for miles on their hands and knees beneath the thorn trees, their clothes and skin were torn to tatters, and as they had to close their eyes for fear of the long, sharp thorns, they lost their way and crept home more dead than alive.

Do you wonder why so many tried to force their way up that dangerous mountainside?

Then listen, for this was the reason. At the very top of the mountain there were no thorn trees; instead apple and pear trees waved their blossoming branches gently

above great beds of fern. Among the ferns ran a rippling stream, and where the stream started there was a tiny pool of sparkling water. But although this spot was very lovely and although it was always summer there, that was not the reason that men risked their lives to reach it. The secret was this. The clear water of the pool was filled with magic. It was the water of youth, and whoever drank of it, or even splashed his hand in its ripples, kept always the strength and joy and beauty of a youth or of a maiden.

It was no wonder, was it, that hundreds flocked to the steep mountain and tried to climb it?

Princesses who longed to keep their beauty told the princes who loved them that they must bring them a cup of the magic water before they would consent to marry them. And princesses are not the only people in the world who wish to keep young.

So there were always men, rich and poor, struggling to reach the mountain top, and when they failed the magician who owned the pool laughed with scorn. He was an old

man wearing a tall pointed cap and a cloak covered with strange figures. He lived in a huge, black castle, far from the mountain and the pool of youth, but he owned a magic mirror in which he could see everything that happened in the world. And every time he saw a young man fall back from the thorn trees, wounded and disheartened, he smiled, and rubbed his hands with glee.

But sometimes they went on, these brave and bleeding youths; sometimes they forgot their weariness in thinking of the beautiful ladies they loved, for whose sake they were willing to risk all dangers.

A very few had reached the top of the mountain and seen before them the blossoming trees and the blue light of the magic pool. But that was all! Just as their hearts rose with joy over their success they heard the hoarse call of hundreds of blue jays—"Jay! jay! jay!" the birds called angrily, their blue wings glistening as they flew at the weary youths. They were the magician's watchmen, and far away in his black castle he heard their call and hurried to his en-

chanted mirror. There he watched the birds attack the young men, tearing their jewels and golden ornaments, their swords or daggers, from them with their sharp beaks, and then, with one stroke of the magician's magic wand against the mirror, the poor youths suddenly changed. Their feet grew into the ground, branches shot out of their shoulders, and they became trees, blossoming fruit trees, whose branches waved gently over that quiet spot.

But one day a man with a new weapon climbed the mountain. He was not a prince, for he carried no sword or dagger, and he was not a workman for he did not bear an axe or an anvil. He was wrapped in a gray cloak, and his weapon was a tiny flute.

His music was so sweet and entrancing that even the old, black thorn trees listened, and drew back their thorns, making way for the traveller. And the heart of the mountain heard it and gently bowed its steep side so that the stranger found an easy path. And the blue jays heard it, just as they started to

warn the magician with their cries, and they stopped in mid-flight, silent and startled, for the flute's notes were, "Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho!" Like the blue jay's whistle, only far sweeter and clearer.

They flew to the stranger, drawn to him they knew not why, perched upon his shoulders, and followed and led him forward until he reached the pool of youth. He bent over it and filled a cup with the magic water. Though it was a simple wooden cup it seemed to be full of diamonds when the sparkling water brimmed over it. But the flute-player did not drink it, did not even touch a drop with his fingers. Instead he turned and threw cup after cup of the enchanted water upon the blossoming fruit trees, all that was left of the brave princes who had sought the pool.

And then a strange thing happened! The branches stopped rustling, they stood straight and still, until with a loud tearing and a trembling the tree trunks burst open, and out of each tree there stepped a young man!

They were unarmed, and their belts and

The tree trunks burst open and out of each tree there stepped a young man.

jewels and chains had gone, but they were alive and free.

Lifting his flute to his lips the stranger played again, softly and pleadingly. "Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho!" called the flute notes, and the blue jays understood. Into holes in the ground they flew, among the ferns, behind the trees; and from these hiding-places they brought out the precious possessions they had stolen, and piled them at their owners' feet.

Then again the stranger breathed into the flute, a quick march tune floated out, and eager and triumphant the princes picked up their jewels and their swords and turning, marched down the gentle slope the mountain had made for the flute-player, between the trunks of the thorn trees which had separated to clear his path.

The stranger was left beside the enchanted pool, and at that moment the wicked magician looked into his magic mirror.

Furious with rage and disappointment he struck the glass with his wand,—but the reflection remained the same. The blossoming

trees had gone, the stranger stood, quiet and erect beside the pool, and around him crowded the blue jays.

"My arts are at an end," moaned the magician. "No magic can injure the music makers of the world." Then down the mountain slope walked the flute-player, the birds still around him, and behind him ran a little stream. For the pool of the water of youth had run dry, and, in the form of a rippling stream, it followed the flute-player, —always, some folks say. But I do not see how that is possible, unless it changed at times into a ripple of music, and ran through all his tunes.

III

THE STORY OF PRINCE SCARLET

THERE was once a prince whose robes and mantle were always of gorgeous, scarlet silks. Upon his head he wore a crown of rubies, and his golden belt and sword-hilt flashed with the same splendid, red stones. He rode a milk-white horse, and could be seen miles away, a shining spot of red and white.

But when the people of his father's kingdom saw him coming, they ran into their houses, or hid behind trees; and as he rode proudly up to the palace, no one cheered him, not even the small boys. Even his father, the king, was afraid of him, and his sisters, who were little girls, hid beneath the table rather than speak to him.

For this Prince Scarlet, as he was called, was mean and cruel; his eyes were narrow and sly, and his voice harsh and loud.

The king knew that he was growing old, and that soon this son would be king in his place. That thought worried him a great deal, for he knew what a wicked ruler the prince would make.

So the old king sent for the forest fairies, who had always been his friends, begging them to come and advise him in his trouble.

In answer to his summons, they all flew in at the palace window one bright morning; and when they had folded their rainbow wings, and settled in a circle around the king, they looked very serious. They knew why they were needed, and the night before, in the forest, they had discussed the problem by the light of a full moon. There they had come to one decision: before Prince Scarlet became king, he must be taught how to behave in a kingly fashion.

The king agreed to this. "But how?" he asked sorrowfully; "how can such a cruel man be taught?"

And the fairies answered together, "He must become the bird he is most like."

"What is that?" questioned his father.

And the chorus of fairies answered: "A crow!"

"I do not see how that will teach him anything," moaned the king.

But the fairies promised that if the prince were left entirely in their hands, they would teach him to be kind; and to this the king consented.

When the prince awoke the next morning and looked for his scarlet clothes, they were gone. In their place lay a mantle of black feathers. Angry and puzzled, he kicked it aside, but immediately it sprang up and folded itself around him. He became an ugly crow, and crying, "Caw! Caw!" flew right out of the palace window to the forest beyond.

He was furious; but anger was of no use. When he tried to shout with rage, the only word Prince Scarlet could utter was "Caw!" and the only motion he could make was a flapping of his wings. Round and round the trees he flew until he was so tired and miserable that he dropped upon the ground. But soon he began to think how hungry he was, and as there was no chance of a dozen

servants bringing him dainty food in golden dishes, as they did in the palace, he wondered how he would find food.

Then, because he was a crow, it seemed to him that nothing in the world could be as delicious as a few kernels of raw corn. Raising his wings, he flew across the tree-tops to a corn-field, and was just about to alight and eat from the ripe ears, when he saw a farmer standing below pointing a gun straight at him. He dashed aside just as the gun went "bang!" and flew quickly back to the deep woods.

Prince Scarlet was now frightened as well as hungry, two feelings he had never had before; and as he cowered down upon the ground, he suddenly thought, "How many times in my father's kingdom have I seen hungry folks whom I laughed at! Did they feel as wretched as I did when that gun was pointed at me? How sorry I am I did not help them!"

At that moment, although Prince Scarlet did not know it, one of the feathers beneath his wings turned to a brilliant red.

A very miserable life the prince led for the next months. Sometimes he found a bite to eat, before he was driven away by the fear of a gun or a scarecrow; and at last the cold weather came. He did not have sense enough to fly South with the other birds; perhaps the fairies did not mean that he should, for the first snow-storm taught him another lesson. As he ruffled his black feathers and shivered with the cold, it flashed across his mind, "How often have I scoffed at people shivering in rags. Oh, how sorry I am!"

Then another feather turned scarlet, and the fairies smiled, and rustled their wings with delight.

As the poor crow flew across the snow-covered fields in search of food, he passed a little girl crying bitterly. Perching on a fence near by he cried, "Caw! Caw!" which sounded so dismal, that the child cried harder than ever.

"If only I could sing one sweet note to comfort the poor little girl!" thought Prince Scarlet, and at once, *all* his feathers turned

to a gorgeous scarlet! He had become the most splendid bird you have ever seen, a cardinal-bird, and out of his little throat poured a beautiful, clear song.

The child stopped crying at the sound, and when she looked up and saw the cheerful red bird beside her, she smiled with pleasure.

After that, Prince Scarlet's life was a very happy one. He sang his ringing song in storm and sunshine, comforting many who were tired and sad and sick. And never in his life as a prince had he been so contented.

The fairies watched him closely, and at the end of a year, they circled around him as he perched on the bough of a forest tree, already covered again with green leaves. "We have come," they cried, "to give you a wish as a reward for the useful life you are leading."

Do you suppose the scarlet bird wished to be a prince again? Not at all; he had grown to think first of others.

"I wish," he answered, in his lovely bird voice, "that in all the dark places beside the road and on banks of streams, there could

be something as bright and cheerful as my red feathers."

The fairies waved their wands, and among ferns, bending over brooks and streams, along dreary roadsides, and in the dark nooks of the forest, appeared,—not a red feather,—but a red flower as brilliant and cheerful as the cardinal-bird.

"The cardinal-flower will remind numberless people of your sweet song," sang the fairies. "And your wish was such a beautiful one, you may have another."

"Oh," sighed Prince Scarlet, "there are so many homes I cannot fly to, so many people who need my song. Can you not send other cheerful birds to them?"

Again the fairies waved their wands, and in response a great flock of scarlet birds filled the air, and flew, singing, across the forest to gladden the hearts of many, many people.

"Now for a third wish," cried the fairies, "and we must tell you, first, that the king, your father, is too old and feeble to reign any more; the people are looking for a new

king, and there is strife and discontent within the kingdom."

"I have but one desire for them," answered Prince Scarlet. "May they find a king as brave and faithful as my father!"

Once more the fairies waved their wands, and in an instant the cardinal-bird was flying straight to the palace. As he reached its long flight of marble steps he alighted, and then,—the bird had gone!

In its place stood a young prince in gorgeous red robes. Could he be Prince Scarlet? His eyes were so kind, his mouth so smiling, and his voice so sweet and ringing, that a crowd of people gathered around him, crying, "Our king! Our king!"

And so Prince Scarlet was crowned king; and as the golden crown was placed upon his head, his robes seemed to glow, to flutter, to fill the air with a ruby light. "Almost like the wings of a cardinal-bird!" exclaimed the joyful people.

IV

THE STORY OF THE SONG-SPARROW

THERE was once a king who had two beautiful daughters. The eyes of one were gray and her hair dark and long; she was called Princess Night; while the other, who had blue eyes and hair as golden as the sunbeams, was called Princess Day.

Princess Night wore a crown of diamond stars upon her waving, black hair, and her dark, blue mantle was embroidered with shining stars and a silver moon.

Princess Day wore a crown of jewelled flowers, her soft white gown was held in place by a girdle of golden butterflies and her mantle, which was sky-blue, was embroidered with birds of lovely colours. The two princesses were so fond of each other, and of the king, their father, that all went happily in the palace until one day the king married a woman who was a wicked witch.

He did not know how bad she was, but he ought to have guessed, for her eyes were bold and cruel, and her mouth was narrow and ugly. She was a jealous stepmother to the two princesses, and the sweeter they were with her the more she hated them and tried to do them harm. She was especially angry when she saw how the people loved them, for they cheered, waved their handkerchiefs, and cried, "Hurrah," whenever the princesses passed; signs of love they never showed at the sight of her cruel face. So the witch made up her mind that she must get rid of her stepdaughters at all costs.

She shut herself up for days in a room in the castle tower, a place with no windows, so that neither light nor sound could enter. She knew that the most wicked of her tricks would not work unless they were planned away from the light of sun and moon, and in a place where no song from man or bird could be heard. So behind the thick, stone walls of the tower room, lighted by the glow of a red lamp, she worked her charms. She made a diamond star and a ruby rose

that looked like one of the stars and one of the flowers in the princesses' crowns, but oh, how different they really were!

They were filled with magic, as we shall see.

And all the time the stepmother worked she kept the goblins and demons who were her slaves working too. She ordered them to build a high, stone tower, with only one small window near the top to let in air, and to prepare a mist which would hide this tower from all the world. It was a strange mist, which no sound or ray of light could pass through, for the witch knew, as I said before, that a ray of light or a note of music would destroy her wicked charms.

In this tower she planned to imprison forever the two princesses.

At last her work was done, the star and flower finished, and the tower and mist ready. Then with a cruel smile she kissed the princesses, saying she had a present for each of them, an addition to their lovely crowns.

They took the gifts without dreaming of harm, and thanked their stepmother prettily.

Princess Night placed the brilliant star stone with the others in her crown, while Princess Day lay the ruby rose beside a shining water lily.

And then,—they fell into a sleep so deep and so long that they never knew what horrible goblins surrounded them, lifted, and flew with them to the lonely tower hidden in the silent, dreary mist.

When they woke in the dark they were terrified, and if they had not remembered they were princesses I think they would have cried. As it was they tried to be brave, to wink back their tears and find a way out of their prison. But the only opening was the tiny window far above their heads, through which came a glimmer of cold gray mist.

So they held each other's hands, and through the long days which followed they tried to forget their loneliness in talking of all the beautiful things they had once seen in the world,—flowers and birds, stars and sunshine.

The goblins brought them food, so they did not starve, and sometimes they slept al-

though they never knew whether it was day or night. That strange gray mist was never any lighter or any darker as it streamed through the tiny window.

The poor king was miserable when he found his daughters had disappeared, and the witch queen made believe she was sorry too. She said she couldn't imagine where they had gone unless they had run away with the two princes, Prince Night-wind and Prince Dawn, who were their dearest friends, and who had hoped to some time marry them.

So the king sent for the princes, and when he found they had left the country he was forced to believe that they had run away with his two daughters. He and his people put on black robes and all the bells were tolled solemnly to show how the whole kingdom mourned the loss of Princess Day and Princess Night.

But, as *we* know, the princes had not run away with their lady-loves. Instead of that they were trying their best to find the princesses. They knew what had happened, for

the evening star, which twinkles in the sky before any of the other stars open their eyes, had seen the sisters carried away. This star sang a little song to the princes telling them that far to the north, hidden by a thick mist, stood a tower in which the princesses were shut up. There was only one way to save them, the star said. If the sisters could be made to sing, to answer perhaps a song outside their tower, the charm would be broken.

That seemed very simple to the princes. They had often sung songs beneath the palace windows and the princesses had answered with still sweeter music. So very hopefully the two young men hurried to the north until they reached the magic mist. All day they tried to sing there, but not one whisper could be heard through that grayness. And the light of the lantern they carried went out at once, for no beam could shine there, and the princes lost their way and struggled back disappointed and discouraged.

Just as they reached the edge of the fog again the sun was rising over the world, and

hundreds of birds of all colours and with many different songs were singing gladly to welcome it.

"I have a splendid plan," exclaimed Prince Night-wind. "Let us send two birds to sing to the princesses. They can fly over the mist, and when the maidens hear their song they will surely sing themselves for joy."

"That is a fine idea," answered Prince Dawn. "Let us choose the most beautiful birds here to break the spell which imprisons our beloved princesses."

So they chose a bright blue and a gorgeous orange bird, and quickly they flew away over the mist. But when they reached the little tower window all their notes died away. They could sing beautifully in the sunrise light, but in a dark-gray fog they forgot their song, and slowly and sadly they flew back to tell the princes of their failure.

For a moment Prince Night-wind and Prince Dawn stood silent and puzzled. Then a little brown bird, a song-sparrow, beside them twittered, "The darker the day, and the deeper the mist, the sweeter is my song.

Do send me! Do send me!" The last words were sung in three long sweet notes, after which the sparrow gave a trill so gay and bright that even the sunrise itself was not more joyful.

The orange bird and the blue bird flapped their wings scornfully, but the princes were delighted.

"Dear little sparrow," they cried. "Sing like that to the princesses and they will surely answer you."

So off over the gray mist and down to the tiny window flew the song-sparrow. On the window sill it perched and then, although the mist was grayer and colder than ever, it sang as if all the glory of the sunrise was around it.

Within the tower the princesses sprang to their feet, listening with shining eyes, and when the last trill died away they sang in answer:

"O little bird, you sing of light,
From stars and moon and sun so bright,
The fragrance of flowers fills your song,
You bring us the hope for which we long."

As their voices rose, sweet and clear, a

queer rumbling sound was heard, and at the last note the tower crumbled and fell, while the mist lifted, for the charm was broken!

The wicked queen was driving in the royal coach with the king at that moment; but, being a witch, she knew what had happened, and fearing that when the king found what she had done he would cut off her cruel head, she turned into an ugly old hag and flew away on a broomstick.

Oh, how surprised the king and all his people were! But an instant later they had another surprise and a pleasanter one. For up the street, on a fine, black horse, rode Prince Night-wind with the Princess Night behind him, and beside them, on his white horse, rode Prince Dawn, with the Princess Day.

Then all the bells were rung again, wildly and happily this time, and the people danced in the streets, while the king danced in his palace.

For his dear daughters had come home again, more beautiful and loving than ever, and with them had come the princes who

had saved them, whom they married that very day.

And what music do you suppose they had for the wedding?

Not an organ, or fiddle, or flute, nothing but a chorus of little brown song-sparrows; but the folks who were there say that never in all their lives had they heard such sweet and joyous music.

V

THE PRINCESS MEADOWLARK

Part One

THERE was once a tiny house surrounded by green meadows where three little boys lived with their older sister. Every morning she left them to drive the cows to pasture, and while she was gone the little brothers scrubbed the house, polished the windows until they shone like diamonds, and laid the fire for the nice supper the sister cooked when she came home.

All day she was away in the green meadows with the cows, and while she watched them she knitted stockings for the little brothers, and listened to the birds. Ever since her childhood she had done this, and had learnt, not only to understand the birds' notes, but to sing back to them in their own language. The meadowlarks were her best friends, for the fields were full of them, and

from sunrise to sunset their long, sweet notes and the girl's replies filled the air. She looked like a meadowlark herself, as she sat on the green grass, dressed in a brown frock; and her song was so like the birds she was answering that the villagers gave her the name of "Little Meadowlark."

One day, while Little Meadowlark was watching the cows and knitting as usual, a golden coach drove through the fields and stopped beside her. She sprang to her feet and made a curtsey, for within the coach sat a princess. She was dressed in shining robes of blue and green, a sparkling crown was upon her head, and beside her stood a peacock, his gorgeous feathers of the same colours as the royal robes.

She was the Princess Peacock, and she had stopped beside the herd of cows to ask for a cup of milk.

Trembling with excitement Meadowlark milked her finest cow, and, curtseying again, presented her wooden bowl, filled with foaming milk, to one of the Princess's ladies. The lady looked scornfully at the bowl, as she

"If only I could drink out of a jewelled cup and have a peacock for a friend!"

poured the milk into a cup of gold and diamonds, and gave it to the Princess.

Never before had Meadowlark seen a jewelled cup, or shining satin robes, or a real princess. She gazed and gazed at them, and even after the coach had driven away she still stood there, wondering and longing.

"If only I could wear a satin gown and a golden crown," she sighed. "If only I could drink out of a jewelled cup and have a peacock for a friend!"

The meadowlarks were singing sweetly to the setting sun, but the girl did not answer or even listen to them. The knitting fell from her hands, many stitches dropping from the stockings the little brothers needed so badly, and the cows strayed into the swamp before Little Meadowlark remembered and called them back. In the home the three boys stood with their noses pressed against the window-pane, watching for their sister, and when at last she came home tired and cross, they wondered what in the world had happened. They felt better when the fire was lighted and the soup

in the big kettle began to boil. But Meadowlark was so busy wishing she had a jewelled bowl to eat her supper out of, that she let the good soup burn, and the boys had to go to bed hungry.

The next day things were no better. Meadowlark spent the morning making believe that her short brown skirt was a trailing satin robe which she lifted daintily as the Princess had done. Meanwhile the cows wandered in all directions, and the knitting lay unheeded in the grass.

But when the sun was getting low the discontented girl heard a rustling behind her, and turning, beheld—the Princess!

She was walking, her robes trailing behind her, and her only companion was the peacock.

"Oh, little country girl," she exclaimed, "ever since I saw you here yesterday I have envied you, and longed to live in the green meadows as you do! Won't you teach me how to milk cows, and knit stockings, and sing with the birds?"

"And I am so tired of living here," answered

Little Meadowlark. "I want to wear fine clothes, to drink from jewelled cups, and have trains of ladies following me."

The Princess laughed merrily. "That is splendid," she cried. "As you, too, are tired of your life, let us change. Wearing my crown and robes you can return in my place to the palace. We look so much alike that no one will know the difference. And I will wear your brown frock and wooden shoes, and live in these lovely green meadows."

Of course Meadowlark was delighted with the idea. Before the sun had set they had changed clothes, and the country girl had told the Princess how to milk a cow, knit stockings, and cook soup for the little brothers at home. When the Princess heard of the brothers she was happier than ever.

"I will take such good care of them that they will love me," she said. And while Meadowlark walked off proudly in the royal robes, the peacock stalking after her with his tail spread, the Princess ran gaily to the little house, driving the cows before her.

When the brothers saw her smiling face

and heard her gay laugh, they ran to welcome her. And when they tasted the hot soup she cooked with such care, they smacked their lips and thought it great fun to have a princess for a sister.

So the days went by happily. While Meadowlark, the make-believe Princess, trailed contentedly around the palace, the real Princess learned to milk cows, to knit stockings, and, best of all, she learned how to sing with the meadowlarks.

At sunrise and at sunset, when the birds were singing their sweetest notes, the song of the Princess rose above them, so tender and so thrilling that the villagers in the distance exclaimed, "Little Meadowlark's song grows more perfect every day!"

Part Two

Far from the Palace of the Peacock, or the home of Little Meadowlark, there lived a prince. His castle was surrounded by meadows, and he was called The Prince of the Meadowlands. Many flowers blossomed there and birds sang, but still the Prince was

lonely. He wanted a princess to work and play with him, and he did not know where to find the right one.

So he walked across the fields to the home of a shepherd who was also a flute-player. His cloak was gray and old, but his eyes were as clear and true as the Prince's, and people sometimes thought him a king in disguise. (We know who he was, do we not? Our Shepherd from whom we learned these tales.)

When the Prince asked his advice about the Princess, the shepherd answered at once, "There is but one Princess in the world for you. It is the Princess whose song is like the notes of the meadowlark."

So the Prince mounted a fine black horse, and rode to all the palaces in the land, asking to see the princesses who lived there. He looked so splendid in his shining armour that the princesses received him gladly, each hoping that he had come to say to her, "Will you be my Queen?" But after he had asked her to sing him her favourite song, he always turned away disappointed.

Some sang about sparkling jewels, others of shining robes, or splendid palaces, or merely about their own beauty. They were not always the words they meant to sing, but when the Prince looked at them with his clear eyes, and asked for the song they loved the best, they had to sing about whatever they thought of most of the time.

One day the Prince rode up to the palace of the Princess Peacock, the make-believe Princess, you know. She was walking in the royal garden, with a flock of blue and green peacocks strutting before her, and many lords and ladies, who also looked like peacocks, behind her. When the Prince asked her to sing to him she tried to remember the song she used to sing so prettily, the song of the meadowlark. But instead, what song do you think she sang, or rather shrieked?

It was so loud and rough that the lords and ladies ran terrified into the palace, the peacocks lowered their spreading tails and scuttled across the flower beds, while the Prince jumped over the garden wall.

It was the piercing cry of a silly peacock!

So the Prince rode back to his castle of the Meadowlands, and told the shepherd of his adventures.

The flute-player smiled quietly. "Princesses do not always live in palaces," was all that he would say.

So again the Prince started on his travels. This time he journeyed on foot; over his shining armour he threw a dark cloak, and on his head he wore a pilgrim's wide-brimmed hat. No one knew he was a prince, and many quiet folks welcomed him gladly into their little homes, offering him food and rest.

After supper the Prince would ask them to sing to him, and, like the princesses, they always had to sing about what they thought of most of the time.

In this way the Prince heard much lovely music. He heard old people sing beautiful songs full of love for others; boys and girls sang of dreams of what they wanted to be and do; and mother's songs were like whispering wind and cooing doves. Gayest of all were the songs of the children. They were about dancing flowers, and rippling

brooks, and little fairies. But still the Prince of the Meadowlands did not hear the song he listened for daily, the song of the meadowlark.

Late one afternoon he reached a little house standing among green fields. Three little boys stood in the doorway, watching and listening. The Prince turned to see what they were looking at, and through the golden sunlight, over the soft green grass, he saw a lovely maiden walking. She wore a brown frock and wooden shoes, but her hair shone like a golden crown, and her face was the most beautiful the Prince had ever seen.

Around her there were hundreds and hundreds of meadowlarks filling the air with their music.

The Prince stepped forward, drawing his cloak about him, and stooping like an old and weary traveller. "Will you not sing to me?" he said to the maiden. "Sing me the song that you love the best."

So the Princess opened her lips and sang. Her song was like the notes of the meadowlarks around her, only even more wonderful,

more tender and caressing. Even the birds kept quiet to listen, and the Prince stood straight, his hat and cloak slipping from him, as he forgot everything but the beauty of the song he had listened for so long.

As the maiden ceased, the Prince knelt at her feet. His armour glittered in the sunlight and dazzled the Princess and she looked away. "What do you seek?" she asked. The Prince took her hand and gazed into her eyes. "I seek you, my Princess of the Meadowlarks," he answered, and the Princess, because she was a real princess, was not surprised or embarrassed. Leaving her hand in his she walked joyfully with him, over the meadows and far away, to the castle of the Meadowlands, where he made her his Queen.

Of course the little brothers went too, and they each had a suit of silver armour with a waving plume and a tiny sword. They were as happy in the castle as they had been in the cottage, for the meadows full of birds and flowers were still around them, and I am sure that the real Princess never forgot how to sing like a meadowlark.

VI

THE QUEST OF THE WILD DUCK

ON the top of the mountain where the Shepherd tended his sheep and gathered the children around him, there was a small, deep lake. A flock of wild ducks lived there, and although they often flew off on journeys they always returned. There they swam and dove, nested and hatched ducklings, and it was there, on its mossy banks, that the children heard this tale.

The flock of wild ducks once flew over a great forest and alighted on a tiny pond hidden among the trees. Although few people knew it this was an enchanted forest, and the deer who bounded through it, the birds who lived in its branches, even the wolves and bears whose eyes could be seen gleaming through the night, were enchanted lords and ladies, whom the wicked wizard who owned the forest had turned into animals.

Around the forest there ran a river, owned by a good river-fairy, which worked its way through marshes and streams into the heart of the woods where it became the pond. Over the river and pond the wizard had no power, and if the enchanted animals had known it they could have swum out into the water and escaped. Even then they would have kept their animal forms unless they learned the secret of how to break the wizard's power, and they could have learnt that in the forest as well as on the river, if they had only listened to the message which the murmuring trees and the singing birds had for them. The first one to learn this secret was a wild duck. She had been the beautiful Princess of Cloudlands, until the wizard caught her in his forest. Then her long white neck became covered with feathers, her lovely arms changed to wings, and when her attendants searched the forest for her they found, in the spot where she had been, a wild duck. Around her neck, where she always wore a string of pearls, there was a ruffle of curly white feathers. Otherwise she

looked like any other wild duck, and the attendants wished they had a gun with which to shoot it, never dreaming it was their beloved Princess.

She learned about the good river-fairy, but she was too timid to swim away alone, and she merely cooled her little feet in the streams or swam around the edge of the pond, until the day when the flock of wild ducks settled there.

Very shyly she asked if she might join their party, and after they had looked approvingly at her wide-pointed wings and her slender neck with the strange little ruffle around it, they flapped their wings in welcome. There was one young duck who thought her especially charming. He did his best to make her feel at home, making way for her beside him, and offering her his nice supper of fresh water bugs. But the Princess was quiet and sad. She had learned the secret of how to escape from the wizard and return to her true form of a princess, but the way seemed impossible. The charm could only be broken, the winds and the trees had whispered, by one

who loved her. He must bring her an icicle from the Frost King's palace to eat, a red rose from the garden of the South Wind to smell, and from over the Western Waves a string of magic pearls. With each of these gifts, the wind said, she would lose part of her white feather ruffle, and when at last a prince,—but he must be a real prince,—clasped the pearls around her neck, the remaining feathers would float away, and she would again be the beautiful Princess of Cloudlands.

As the flock of ducks flew back to their home on the mountain lake the next day, the Princess went with them, telling her story as she flew to the generous young duck at her side. When she told him how the charm must be broken so many tears fell from her eyes that the fishes in the stream they were flying over thought it was raining, and popped their noses out to enjoy the shower!

"How," moaned the Princess, "how can any one love a duck enough to travel through cold, and heat, and dangers for her? And even if one would, where in the whole world

could there be a prince who would clasp a string of pearls around a poor bird's throat, while there are princesses in every country who would rejoice at such a gift!"

The young duck felt truly sorry for the sweet Princess. "If only I were a prince," he cried, "I would risk my life gladly for your sake! Already I love you more than any duck I have ever seen."

Then an idea came to him. Why shouldn't he, even if he wasn't a prince, show his courage and his love by seeking for the icicle and the rose? If he lived through such adventures he could also try to find the pearls, and although the enchantment could only be broken finally by a true prince clasping the necklace around her throat, still he would have done his best, and the Princess would know how much he cared for her.

So in the darkness of the night the brave duck said good-bye and set off; and when the Princess heard the whirr-whirr of his wings she almost called him back. She thought of how lonely she would be without him, but she did not give a thought to the

dangers one duck would be in as he flew alone to the Frost King's palace.

On and on flew the duck, through the darkness and cold, over snow-covered fields and frozen lakes. Many hunters sent shots after him, but he thought of the Princess and flew more swiftly than ever. When he reached the North he could not find any food; not a blade of grass grew there, not a fly buzzed, and he was so hungry that he became thin and weak. Still he flew until he reached the country around the Frost King's palace. It is always storming there, and such storms! Think of a pitch-dark night with the wind howling, and sleet and snow swirling through the biting air. A man wrapped in furs could scarcely walk a mile in it, and it was much harder for a poor, tired, little duck to fly through the blinding storm. He lost his way and did not know whether he was flying forward or back; he was dizzy and worn out with cold and hunger. But on he went, very slowly, thinking only of the Princess as he flapped his weary wings that seemed so heavy, and stretched

the neck that could hardly lift his head against the storm. On and on—and on—until he had no strength left and fell to the ground crying "My Princess!"

Then a wonderful thing happened. The duck's eyes were closed at first, so he did not see the storm stop nor the darkness lift. Before him, through the dawning light, one could see a shining palace of ice, around it waved huge frost-covered trees, and as the duck opened his eyes the sun rose, the palace and the trees glittered as if made of diamonds, and he found that he was lying on the lowest step of the stairway leading to the Frost King's palace!

Very graciously the King received the brave young duck, begging him to stay and live with him in the palace. But the duck's one thought was still of the Princess, and when the Frost King had given him a magic icicle, wrapped in many coverings of fine frost paper so that it would not melt, he tucked it under his wing and flew eagerly to the South. There was no storm to fly through this time, nothing but blue sky

above and green grass and silver pools below, and soon the duck reached the mountain lake and his beloved Princess.

"How I have missed you," she said. "Why did you take so long?"

For answer the duck gave her the icicle, and as the Princess ate it he watched a third of the white feathers loosen from around her neck and float softly off into the air.

When the Princess looked at the duck again her eyes had a gentle look.

"You must have had a dreadful journey," she said, "and it was all for my sake. Do not go again; stay with the flock and me and be safe."

But the duck was impatient to be off. "I have only begun to break the charm," he said, and again the Princess heard the whirr-whirr of his wings as he rose high in the air and flew away, this time to the South.

He found plenty of food there, green water-weed and golden flies, but there were more hunters, too, and many times a day their guns went bang-bang as the duck sped swiftly southward—unhurt.

At last he reached a desert, and although the storm lands of the North had been terrible, the hot sand, with no shade, no food, and no water, was far worse. Still he flew on, day and night, so weary that he knew not where or why he flew and his only thought was "My Princess." At last one day, when the sun was high, and the desert was hotter than an oven, he fell fainting upon the sand.

Then a breeze began to blow, the shadows lengthened as the sun sank behind golden clouds, and when the duck opened his eyes he saw before him green lawns and splashing fountains, for he was lying at the entrance to the garden of the South Wind. In that garden the South Wind begged him to remain always. She was a lovely lady with golden robes and flying golden hair on which she wore a wreath of red roses. Her ladies were the gentle breezes, and they carried armfuls of sweet pinks which they threw at one another as they blew over the grass.

But the duck only stayed long enough to regain his strength in the flower-circled pools and fountains. Then he asked the South

Wind to give him one red rose from her wreath, and with it in his beak he flew home to the mountain lake. It was not a long journey this time, for the breezes went with him and blew him back to his flock and his Princess.

She took one long whiff of the rose and then, as half of the remaining curly white feathers floated away, she gazed into the brave duck's eyes.

"You risked your life to bring me this," she said. "No prince could prove his love for a princess more nobly than you have done. Stay here now and marry me."

But the duck hardly took time to reply. "My work is not yet finished," he cried, as he rose in the air again and whirr-whirr he was off to the Western Waves.

That was the hardest trip of all. Over miles and miles of roaring waves and crashing surf he flew. The West Wind blew him back; he had no food, no resting place, and nothing could be seen except the raging gray sea beneath him, and the black storm-clouds above him.

But still he flew on—and on—and on—until one day he fell, worn out, into the waves below. He did not know that the West Wind herself caught him in her white arms, carried him tenderly to her coral cave, and sang him her sweetest song; while the sea turned to sapphire and the sky became as clear as on a summer's day. When he awoke he saw it all, and although the palace of the Frost King had been gorgeous, and the garden of the South Wind lovely and fragrant, this dwelling of the West Wind, hung with shells and seaweed and filled with the murmuring of the sea, was the most beautiful of all.

"Stay with me," whispered West Wind. "Play with my waves and my clouds and we will be gentle always as we are to-day."

But the wild duck would not stay and his only desire was for the string of magic pearls. West Wind blew a message through her waves, and an enormous oyster appeared bearing the treasure of the sea, a string of pearls which shone with the rainbow colours of the sparkling sea-foam.

"Listen to me," sang the West Wind; "these pearls will change the outward form of any one who wears them, so that it is like their inward spirit." She clasped the string around the duck's neck, his feathers flew away, and there in his place stood a splendid and noble prince!

"Will you not stay with me now?" asked West Wind. "If the duck princess has grown selfish or unloving, these pearls will not help her. She may even turn into something far worse than a wild duck, and you will have left the West Wind, who loves you, for nothing."

But when she found that she could not keep the Prince, she grew angry and her sweet blue eyes turned to a steely gray.

"Then test your Princess," she cried; "let her choose between you as you are and the wild duck you used to be. If she chooses unfairly you and she shall remain wild ducks forever."

So she gave him a cloud to ride on, and blew him over the waves to the mountain lake where the Princess was watching for him.

She was swimming close to the bank where the Prince alighted, but of course she did not recognize the young duck in the splendid gentleman.

Then, although she was nothing but a brown bird, he took off his plumed hat and made her a low bow.

"Princess," he said, 'I have heard of your enchantment from a wild duck, and have brought the pearls with which to break the spell. Let me clasp them around your neck that you may return to your own beautiful form." But the Princess shook her head.

"No, indeed," she answered; "that same wild duck has risked his life three times for my sake. I love him more than I could love another, even a prince, and I would rather remain a duck and live with him in this lake than be a princess without him in the finest palace in the land."

And then—cannot you imagine what happened then? The Prince threw the pearls over the duck's long neck, the remaining feathers in the white ruffle drifted away, and

the Prince held out his hand to help a beautiful Princess step to the shore, the Princess of Cloudlands.

The instant she saw that this splendid Prince was her brave wild duck, she rewarded him for all his labours with a kiss that was sweeter than the South Wind's rose.

So, Prince and Princess, they journeyed together in West Wind's cloud to the Kingdom of Cloudlands. There the people welcomed them gladly, and they were married and crowned King and Queen the selfsame day.

VII

HEATHER FAIRIES

MANY times the children who surrounded the Shepherd on the mountainside had begged him to tell them a story about himself. "What did you do when you were a little boy? Do tell us," they pleaded.

So one day the Shepherd told this tale. He did not say that he was the little Prince whom the story is about, but the children guessed that he was, and when he finished they cried, "The gift of the Heather Queen is what you give to us, dear Shepherd, every day!"

Once upon a time a discontented boy Prince wandered from the castle, where he lived, to a hillside covered with pink heather. Ever since he had outgrown toys he had been restless and unhappy, longing for something, he knew not what. He was tired of the pal-

ace and the grave, formal life his parents lived, tired of long lessons with his dreary tutor, tired of banquets and processions and fine clothes. He was thinking sadly of these things as he climbed the hillside, and just as the warm fragrance of noon time filled the golden air, he threw himself down upon the heather, closed his eyes, and gave a long, deep sigh.

To his astonishment the sigh was echoed mockingly by hundreds of tiny voices, and then he heard a laugh, so merry and ringing, that it sounded as if silver bells and fairy music mingled in the peal.

The little Prince opened his eyes and beheld in every pink heather cup a wee fairy, with a heather blossom upon his head and another in his hand, which rang as he shook it, like a tiny bell.

They were all gazing at him, laughing and nodding their heads, again echoing his sigh and then laughing until the heather bushes shook, and one jolly fairy came tumbling down to the ground head first. It wasn't really the ground he landed upon, it was the Prince's

arm, and he ran up it tinkling his heather bell and laughing more gaily than ever.

"Take off this Prince lad's hat!" he cried in a silvery little voice; "he belongs to us. The White Heather Queen is his godmother, and the longing to play with his relations has made him lonesome and unhappy for many months."

"Yes, yes, pull his hat off; give him his magic cap instead," cried all the others, and amid much ringing of bells and peals of laughter the Prince felt his green velvet hat with its long plume lifted from his head, and something wonderfully soft and fragrant placed there instead.

He put his hand up to feel it, and as he lifted his arm imagine his surprise when he saw that it had shrunk, grown as tiny as a blade of grass, and springing to his feet he found that he was only a very little larger than the fairies who surrounded him.

"Do not fear," they cried; "when you take off the heather cap you will be a big clumsy boy again. And now hurry and play with us, for it is only during the hour of noon that

we can leave our heather homes and play in the warm sunshine."

So the Prince danced and played at hide-and-seek, laughing as merrily as any of his companions, but not until the hour had passed, the fairies had vanished, and by pulling off his heather blossom cap he had grown again into a tall boy, did he realize that all his discontent had gone.

"So it is the fairy folk I have been longing for," he thought; "no wonder if, as they say, their Heather Queen is my godmother and I am really one of them."

Day after day at noon time the Prince climbed the hill, threw off his hat, and felt the fairy cap slipped over his head by soft, wee fingers. Then, no taller than a boy's hand, he spent an hour in such merriment that the time seemed to fly, and he ran back to the palace still smiling over the jokes and antics of his tiny friends. When it rained the fairies drew their waterproof heather cloaks around them and splashed in the raindrops as if they had been puddles.

Sometimes after an exciting game they

rested upon the soft grass and talked about the White Heather Queen and her court. She lived upon a mountain far away to the north, the fairies said, a mountain crowned with clouds and guarded by sheer precipices and raging torrents. Pink and purple heather grew around the base, but high up it was covered with heather as white as the clouds themselves. Every noon time this heather became alive with tiny knights in silver armour and ladies in shining satin and gossamer veils. They flocked out of the heather bushes to the mountain top on which sat their Heather Queen.

None of the pink heather fairies had ever seen her, but they all worked for her, keeping the plants they lived in strong and healthy and tinting the blossoms from pink in the spring time to purple in the autumn.

Once a year members of the Queen's court flew over hills and moors, inspecting the work done by the fairies, and if the heather was in very fine condition a branch of the court was opened in a tuft of white heather among the best cared for blossoms.

How the Prince longed to see this beautiful Queen and receive from her the gift which, the fairies assured him, she kept for each of her godchildren!

"But," they added, "it is only given as a reward for service." And the little Prince had never done a stroke of work in his life.

But there came a day when the fairies quarrelled with their princely playfellow, and not until he had left them did they realize how silly and selfish they had been.

It all happened because, after the Prince had been so happy and merry for many weeks, he wanted to bring a few other lads with him to share in the fairy frolics. He knew that his brothers would not care to come, for they were content with the stiff life at the palace,—but there was the blacksmith's boy who was a cripple, and the carpenter's lad whose mother was bedridden, and the boy who worked in the dark mines summer and winter until his lips had forgotten how to smile.

But when he told his desire to the fairies

they threw down their bells in anger and stamped and scolded until it sounded as if a hornet's nest had been let loose on the hillside.

At last they all rushed at him and did something to his cap with their wee fingers. He could not guess what it was, but when they had vanished and he stood alone upon the hillside he found that his magic cap would not come off. In vain he pushed and pulled and even stood upon his head, for he knew that while it was on he would remain a tiny Prince, no taller than a twig of heather. And that was evidently what the fairies intended, for the cap was stuck on as tightly as if it grew there.

He had always been a brave Prince and his courage had not shrunk as had his green velvet suit and jewelled dagger, so he bit his lip, tightened his golden belt and started off up the hillside.

"There is no use in going back to the palace," he thought; "the Queen's cat would probably eat me for a mouse, and if I travel far enough to the north I may find my god-

mother, the White Heather Queen. She would surely tell me what to do."

All afternoon he trudged manfully along, although he was hungry and tired and puzzled, and just as it was growing dark he reached the hilltop.

There he saw a huge black beetle crawling through the grass, dragging after him something which looked like a bundle of gray silk. But frightened little squeaks came from the bundle, and as they drew nearer the Prince saw a wee pink nose and two bright eyes peeking at him. It was a baby field-mouse the beetle was dragging home for supper!

In an instant the Prince had drawn his tiny dagger and sprung upon the beetle. The animal fought hard with his sharp legs, but the Prince's dagger blade flashed and slashed until the beetle dropped his prisoner and crawled away, wounded and terrified.

Then, while the Prince patted the squeaking baby, he heard the rush of soft, wee feet behind him, and a grateful mother mouse embraced him with her velvety paws.

"You have saved my child's life," she squeaked. "Come back to our home and live with us always."

The Prince said he could not do that, as he was taking a long journey, but he would be very glad to spend the night with the mouse family.

So, with the baby mouse capering beside them they hurried down the hill to the cozy home where barley bread and milkweed porridge were ready for them, and where, with two baby mice for bed quilts, the Prince slept most comfortably.

The next morning the father offered to carry their guest a day's journey in any direction, and the mother packed up a nice little lunch for them to carry with them.

Upon the top of the opposite mountain the Prince had seen a great white patch which he felt sure was the kingdom of the Heather Queen. So begging the mouse to carry him there, he mounted upon the little creature's back and off they started.

But alas, as the sun set they were still some distance from the top, the mouse had

"You have saved my child's life," she squeaked. "Come back to our home and live with us always."

to run home, and when in the darkness the Prince climbed to the spot from where the white gleaming had come he found that it was only a huge white stone!

He ate his few remaining crumbs of barley bread and curled up to sleep under a mushroom, wondering what would happen to him the next day with no food and no idea where he was.

But when the rays of the rising sun awoke him he heard, "Flutter, flutter, flutter," and looking around saw a white moth caught in a large cobweb. Already a great, gray spider was approaching to eat her for his breakfast, and the Prince, forgetting his wounds of the day before, rushed at the long-legged monster and stabbed at the hairy body with his little dagger until the spider rolled over upon his back, all his legs wriggling in the air, and begged for mercy. Then he cut the net which bound the moth and oh, how grateful she was!

"What can I do for you?" she said. "I will carry you anywhere you wish to go."

When she heard that the Prince was seek-

ing the Heather Queen, she told him to mount her quickly and she would fly so fast that they would reach the Queen's mountain before noon, the only time that she, like the other heather fairies, could be seen.

On and on flew the moth, over mountains purple with heather, over moors dotted with white cottages and wood full of rustling leaves and singing birds. At last they reached the highest mountain of all, its top hidden among the clouds, its base covered with rugged rocks and foaming torrents. Into the clouds plunged the moth while the Prince shivered and the moth's wings grew stiff with cold. On she flew slowly until suddenly there was a flash of brilliant sunshine. Overhead the sky was clear and blue and as the moth fluttered to the ground the Prince found himself facing the prettiest sight he had ever seen. The whole mountain top was alive with shining, white fairies. They flew to and fro, their rainbow wings glittering in the sunshine, and above them all, on a throne of white heather, sat the lovely Queen. Her robes glistened, her crown of dewdrops

sparkled, and her smile was as sweet as the warm noon time itself.

Kneeling before her, the Prince kissed her wee, white hand, but the Queen raised him and kissed him upon both cheeks.

"Godchild," she said in a voice like a chime of bells, "dear princely godchild, I have waited such a long time for you to find your way here and win my gift for you. By your kindness in wishing to bring other boys into the fairy frolics, by your courage in saving a baby mouse, and your quickness in aiding a frightened moth you have proved at last that you are worthy of my precious gift."

Then very softly she touched the Prince's lips and heart with her fairy wand and he felt a delicious glow pass through him.

"Your speech shall be golden now," she said, "and your heart shall be filled with mystery and the joy of the fairy folk. I have given you this gift, this art of the story-teller, because I know you will use it aright. You will not put it into heavy books no child could read, you will gather the children of the world around you and tell them tales of

wonder and beauty because,—because, my godson, you have learnt the meaning of the white heather!"

The Prince lifted his happy eyes to hers, and then—he saw nothing but a patch of beautiful white heather!

The noon-hour was over, the fairies had all gone, and pulling off his magic cap, which came off quite easily now, he was a boy again, a boy Prince standing alone upon a mountain top. But as he ran down it and away over the moors and hills to his home he heard the heather bells on every side ringing:

"The white heather's secret,
The white heather's secret
Is always—love!"

VIII

THE SNOW QUEEN AND THE MAGIC BEES

"BUZZ—buzz—buzz," sang the honey-bees, as they circled around the Shepherd, their golden bodies shining in the sunshine. The children watched them eagerly, trying to understand the meaning of their "buzz—buzz," for the Shepherd had promised them a tale from the magic bees and had drawn the swarm to him with the melody the flowers dance to in the warm sunshine. As swiftly as bees fly to the open blossoms, they had answered the Shepherd's notes, buzzing lovingly while they alighted upon his cloak and his flute. Then, suddenly, their buzzing became as easy to understand as a child's song. The children did not know whether the Shepherd's power changed their ears or the bee's language, they only knew that they understood, and they listened spell-bound to this tale of the magic bees.

Many years ago all the bees, honey and bumble, wild and tame, went to sleep in the winter and slept until the sunbeams of spring awakened them. At that time also, in this country of the mountains, the winter was always dark and dreary and there were no sunny days on which the snow and ice could sparkle beneath the blue sky. From the falling of the last leaf to the first sunbeam of spring, King Winter had all his own way; and he is a cold, gloomy fellow, that King Winter. He laughs sometimes, but his laugh is so rough and boisterous that folks mistake it for the roaring north wind, and in those bygone times he loved to see the country dressed just as he was, in a white mantle with no beam of gold upon it, while he kept the skies as gray as his hair and beard.

But a time came when his wife, the Snow Queen, who lived with him in the Ice Palace of the North, began to fade away. She grew so pale and thin that one could look through her, just as if she were made of glass. For years her only amusement had been to ride

over the mountain tops in her snow-cloud chariot, shaking her white feather mantle until the feathers drifted down in the form of snowflakes. But when she became sad and weary she wrapped the mantle around her as she rode and all that fell to the earth were her tears, which of course froze, and came down like hail. So for several months there were dreadful hail-storms every day.

King Winter loved to see things gloomy and forlorn, but in the bottom of his icy heart he loved his Snow Queen and thought her snowflakes his prettiest toys. So he began to worry about her and begged her to tell him what was the trouble.

"I am tired of gloom and grayness," she moaned. "I want to hear about a cheerful world, I want to know what a bird's song is like, I want—oh, I want so much—to play with a human child instead of freezing their noses and toes and having them run from my caresses."

That puzzled the King. He knew that his wife would melt at once if she saw the world

in the summer time, and with all his power he could not make a bird sing or a child smile beneath his cold, gray skies.

He blustered noisily through a forest, waking up several sleeping animals to ask if they would help him. But the squirrels only whisked their tails crossly in reply and curled up again to sleep; a bear rolled over and grunted; and some field-mice bit his icy fingers, they were so upset at having their winter sleep interrupted.

King Winter began to be afraid that none of summer's friends would help him. In his vexation he shook a tree quite roughly, and out of it fell a bees' nest. The bees, awakened so suddenly, flew angrily at the great fur-clad King, their stings out; but when they saw how cold and gray he looked they flew away frightened. Then in the softest voice the King could use—it sounded like a piercing wind—he called them back and told them how sorely he needed their help. "I cannot offer you rewards of flowers or honey," he said, "but I will change you into magic bees which will live forever if you

will come with me and cheer the Snow Queen with tales of summer." So the bees consented, and while they clustered together in the big pocket of the King's fur coat, he flew on the wings of the wind, back to his ice palace.

In a corner of her frozen throne huddled the miserable Queen, looking like a poor worn-out old woman, instead of a Snow Queen. Around her stood the lords and ladies, great silent icicles, and there was not the glimmer of a smile or the murmur of a sweet voice in all that vast, gloomy palace. When the King swept in the lords and ladies bowed with a shivery, tinkling sound, but the Queen did not move.

The King put his hand into his pocket, and drew out the bees. High up into the air he tossed them, and as they opened their wings and drifted down upon the Queen's throne their golden bodies changed, the yellow light left them, and they became *white* bees.

But the Queen had seen them in their golden forms; that one little beam of sun-

shine had brought a smile to her lips and when, looking like soft flakes, they settled upon her, she sat up and gazed at them eagerly.

"Where do you come from, beautiful creatures?" she asked. "You looked like a ray of sunlight, and your buzzing sounds like the echo from a cheerful world. Can you tell me about the bright summer time?"

So the bees sang to her about sweet clover blossoms, and drowsy sunshine, of blue skies, and clear honey, and merry children, and as they buzzed softly her face changed and she grew young and lovely once more.

But suddenly a sadness, like a cloud, swept over her and she sighed, "Why cannot I make the world bright and smiling? Why must I always bring cold and gloom, frostbites and misery?"

Then the buzz of the bees filled the great room as they told her the secret of the summer time, the secret of magic joy and beauty, which she, a Snow Queen, could bring to the world as perfectly as even the Spring Princess.

"Come and help me then," laughed the Queen, and before King Winter or her attendants could ask where she was going, she had sprung into her snow chariot and was whirling through the air, the swarm of bees curling around her. Swiftly she reached the country of the mountains where, as usual at that season, all was gray and forlorn, and miserable, shivering people ran from house to house.

"Now!" cried the Snow Queen, as she shook her mantle in mid air and the feathery snowflakes fell softly. The bees floated down with them and the Queen smiled merrily as she cried, "See, see, my white bees are swarming."

The shivering people, especially the children, looked with wonder at the falling snow. It was different from anything they had ever seen, for the Queen was working the secret charm the bees had taught her, and behind the storm there was a golden light which made the flakes soft and shining.

But as the people watched their amazement grew, for no sooner had the snow ceased fall-

ing than a glorious burst of sunshine changed the snow and ice to glittering lace and powdered diamonds. The sky became as blue as a midsummer's day and a little robin redbreast, who had sat like a forlorn ball of feathers upon a frozen branch, tilted up his head and his tail and broke into a merry song.

The children caught the gladness and laughing and shouting they ran into the glistening snow, picking it up in handfuls to throw at one another.

"Oh, the pretty Snow!" cried the children, and if King Winter hadn't interrupted at that very moment the delighted Queen would have picked up one of those laughing children and carried him away to the ice palace, where he would soon have turned into a lump of ice.

That was the only drawback to the Queen's perfect happiness; she wanted a human child to play with her at the ice palace; during the days she had to let the King take his turn with the world, roaring and tearing over it. One bright day she had had an especially

beautiful time watching some children build forts and figures out of the soft, shining snow. Then she amused them so much sending down snowflakes through the sunshine,—they did not know that only magic bees can do that—that the children stopped their work to watch the pretty flakes.

They had made a snow child that day, and on his head a boy had stuck a cap with a long feather. When the Queen caught sight of it a bright idea came to her. "Why shouldn't I take this snow child home with me?" she cried. And when the real children ran away to supper she stayed, and smiled and smiled upon the snow image. She used all her magic power and the bees helped her, buzzing around the head of the little statue until a pink glow came slowly into his cheeks, his eyes became blue and his ice cloak rattled in the wind. When his feet began to move the Queen snatched him up, for fear he would run away, and they flew joyously home to the palace.

He was a fascinating snow boy with a gay feather in his cap and a merry twinkle in his

eye. Can you guess who he is? You have all felt him and seen his handiwork, even if you haven't seen him, for the Snow Queen teaches her boy Jack how to draw wonderful pictures with ice and frost, and he paints them on the window-panes of all the children whom he loves. Now you surely know,—it was Jack Frost!

"So the Snow Queen is happy and young and beautiful always, and we," buzzed the bees, "we taught her the secret."

IX

STORM SWALLOWS

ONE afternoon the children who listened to the Shepherd's tales were much puzzled by the curious behaviour of the swallows. There were a great many in the village; their nests were built beneath the eaves of every barn as well as in the chimneys of the houses, and they usually stayed near their homes. But this afternoon, when heavy clouds in the sky showed the coming of a storm, they were out on the hillside with the children, and instead of flying in their usual happy sweeping manner, they were swooping close to the ground, uttering shrill cries.

"What is the matter with them?" asked the children. For answer the Shepherd played a swallow's call upon his flute, a swallow stopped swooping and flew quickly to the Shepherd's shoulder, and then the children heard this tale.

Every country child has seen golden dandelions shining along the roadside, pink blossoms opening upon the trees, and blue violets growing beside the streams. Very few people know how all the blossoms in the world get their wonderful colouring, but the swallows know. And because the children who answer the Shepherd's flute are kind to the baby swallows who insist upon tumbling down the chimneys, and scatter crumbs in the winter for the barn swallows, they are willing to let them know the secret.

Among the many wonderful things in the world which human beings cannot see are the artist fairies. When they are very young they have wings with which they fly to the sunset clouds and the rainbow arch, to collect colours for the older fairies, who are so busy working that they have very little time for flying. So their wings drop off, and when they need to go on a journey the swallows are always ready to take them. But most of the time they are busy under the ground, painting with sunset and rainbow colours the tiny buds before they shoot

up and become plants. Some work inside the trees, but most of them are seated upon bits of stone beneath the ground, a pallet in one hand, a brush in the other, and a tiny torch in front of their caps to give them light, painting away busily. They are dressed in brown and as their pointed caps and bright eyes are brown also even a bird might mistake them for bits of brown earth. But the swallows, who are their best friends, never do, and are always watching for the bright, warm days when the little artist fairies pop up from the ground and ask to be carried to a new piece of work. Of course the swallows, because they live near homes, know best where the seeds of a garden have just been sown, where a roadside is dreary and needs bright flowers, or where there is an orchard which ought soon to come into bloom. We do find bright flowers also in wild spots in woods and fields, but that is because the young, flying fairies, returning with tubes overflowing with sunset colours, cannot resist stopping occasionally to practice a little work them-

selves. For most of the lovely flowers are near where people live, in the places where the swallows have seen the need.

That is one way the swallows work with the fairies, and the other is to warn the artists, while they are working a few inches under ground, that a storm is coming. The little fellows hate to get wet; it makes their clothes look like mud, puts out the tiny torch on their caps and their brushes become damp and sticky. So when the swallows fly close to the ground, uttering harsh, warning cries, the fairies know a storm is coming, and they run, through secret, fairy tunnels, deep, deep down in the earth where their other work is waiting for them.

There they find bits of clear stone which they soak in their splendid colours, until the time comes when men, digging down in the earth, find many of the finished stones together, and say they have discovered a sapphire, or an emerald, or a ruby mine, or, if they find the stones into which the fairies have put all the colours of the rainbow, the miners say, "We have discovered a diamond mine."

Then when the tunnels are all well warmed and dried again by the sun, the artists run back, and popping above the ground find the swallows waiting to carry them to new fields and gardens.

They love all their work, but best of all they love colouring the tiny buds in the seeds which children have planted. They save their freshest, prettiest tints for the children's gardens.

"This," continued the swallow, "is one of their stories."

There was once a little boy named Karl, living on a village street, whose greatest joy in life was his garden. He worked there early and late, from the moment the snow melted in the spring until the frost killed the bright flowers in the autumn. And it was such a beautiful garden!

The swallows, who saw how hard he worked over the bare, little yard, brought crowds of artist fairies to help him, and the fairies worked as hard as the lad. From sunrise to sunset they sat painting the seeds he planted, and the result was that there was not

such a gorgeous garden in all the country-side.

Not far from the village there was a castle where a little Princess, just Karl's age, lived with her older brothers and sisters. The Queen, their mother, was dead, and the King, their father, was always busy fighting battles with the neighbouring kings. Of course they, in their turn, often made war upon him, and his home had to be so carefully guarded with moats, and drawbridges, and iron bars, that there was never time or place for a garden to be made near the dismal, stone castle.

No one missed it except the youngest Princess, and she longed for a little garden more than for anything else in the world. If it had not been for her friends, the swallows, the poor child would have been quite miserable in the iron-barred castle, for she did not love the sounds of fighting as her family did, and would not look out of the window when her father came home victorious, bringing prisoners with him.

She would fly up the winding stairs to a

roof of one of the towers, from which she could look off to the woods on one side and to the little village in the distance on the other.

There she would give a call, almost like the notes the shepherd played upon his flute when he called the swallow, and flocks of swift winged swallows would come to the child, perching upon her shoulders, upon the tower wall around her, or just hover in the air above her head. There were deep eaves on the castle where they had built their nests for hundreds of years, and because of their strange manner of flying before a storm, as well as because the castle itself was always being stormed by some angry king, it had come to be called Storm Swallow Castle. And soon, because the youngest Princess was so often seen with a flock of swallows about her, she was called Princess Swallow Wings.

The swallows told her all the prettiest stories they knew, and of course they often told her about their dear little friends, the artist fairies. That made her long more than ever for a garden, but her father laughed

when she asked for one, saying, "No sooner would the plants begin to grow than a war horse's hoofs would plough them up again. No, no, my child, gardens do not belong in Storm Swallow Castle. Think of something else you would like, and as you are a good child and never forget to close the iron shutters when an attack begins, I will give you whatever else you ask for on your next birthday. Now go out for a ride on your pony, for there will be no more fighting to-day."

So Princess Swallow Wings rode out, her friends, the swallows, flying around her, and perhaps because they told her where to go she rode farther that day than ever before. She rode to the little village she had seen in the distance from the castle tower, and down the village street until she came to the wonderful garden. There she stopped, so delighted that she could hardly breathe.

Karl was working there, but when he looked up and saw the dear little Princess with her sweet face glowing with delight, he threw down his spade and picking a bunch of his most lovely flowers he brought them

to her, bowing low before her, bareheaded, as his mother had told him to whenever he met an inhabitant of the castle.

Princess Swallow Wings thanked him prettily and rode away, turning many times for one more look at that glorious garden, which was like the garden of her dreams.

Every day after that, when there was no fighting, the Princess rode to the village, and Karl was always ready for her with a bunch of dewy roses, or a sheaf of golden lilies, or a nosegay of purple and yellow pansies.

So the years passed and as the Princess grew older the King gave her on each birthday what, as she could not have a garden, was her second desire, a gem filled with the rainbow colours of the artist fairies. At last she had a whole string of beautiful, shimmering diamonds, which shone in the sunlight as if all the colours in Karl's garden had found their way there before they vanished. For the garden had gone!

Karl, too, had grown up and had stopped his gardening to spend all his time in painting pictures. Princess Swallow Wings used

to see him as she rode by on her white horse, her moss-green mantle fluttering in the breeze, the string of diamonds gleaming around her white throat. Karl was always sitting at his easel, which he placed in the doorway of his cottage where he could see the approach of the Princess. She smiled sweetly at him, but she never stopped any more. She loved Karl as much as she had loved his garden, and it made her sad to see his pictures.

Karl loved her more than any one had ever loved before, he thought, but of course he was only a poor artist and she was a rich Princess. "She would never marry me," he thought sadly, and then he would turn to his work and paint the kind of picture he thought she would like. They were dull, stiff pictures of knights in armour, princes riding upon war-horses, and kings surrounded by their prisoners. Such pictures might have pleased some people, but the Princess could not bear to look at them, and calling her swallows around her she would ride swiftly past.

Then Karl's face, which had already lost the kind, bright smile it used to have when he worked in his garden, would grow hard and bitter, for it seemed to him that, as the Princess could never love either him or his work, his life was a failure.

By this time all the princes and princesses at Storm Swallow Castle, except the youngest, were married, and as many suitors had come to beg for the hand of Princess Swallow Wings and been refused by her, the King declared that unless she chose one of them within a month he would shut her up in one of the towers.

The Princess was sadly puzzled; whenever she looked at any of her suitors she found herself searching for a kind, bright smile, such as she had seen on Karl's face when he was a boy gardener, and when she did not find it she sent the princely gentleman away. She knew that Karl, too, had lost his bright look, but she loved him for what he had been and she could not bear to marry any one else.

When the King spoke to her so sternly

the swallows were flying swiftly around her, and it seemed to her that they whispered an answer in her ear.

"Royal Father," she said, "there are so many suitors to choose from, let me make a test, and he who is best able to fulfill it shall be my husband. You know how I have always longed for a garden. As we cannot have a real one here will you not promise to give my hand to any man, prince or artist, rich or poor, who can bring to you within a month the most beautiful picture of a garden?"

The King was getting too old to fight much and he found life at home very dull, so this idea amused him immensely. He had it proclaimed through the surrounding country that all who wished to marry his daughter should bring to Storm Swallow Castle, within thirty days, the finest picture they could buy or paint of a beautiful garden.

In the quiet village Karl heard the news and the hard, bitter look left his face. He seemed to see before his eyes his own boyhood's garden where he had worked with

such joy and such splendid success. Throwing aside his dull, colourless paintings he put a new piece of canvas upon his easel and worked, as he had worked in his garden, from sunrise to sunset, with a smile in his eyes and a song upon his lips. Surely the artist fairies helped him, for never had such a garden picture been seen before. The colours were so clear and fresh that the flowers themselves seemed to blossom beneath his fingers.

From far and wide nobles and princes and famous artists came streaming to Storm Swallow Castle, each with an attendant bearing a garden picture. The castle was full of them, both pictures and suitors, but the Princess said the test was not over until sunset on the last day and not until then could the choice be made. On the last afternoon Karl sent a little lad bearing his picture to the castle. Every day the Princess had watched for him in vain and her hope had almost gone when the King sent hastily for her. He was in the great hall where the walls were hung with the garden pictures,

and around him stood the suitors. All were silent, all knew that their chance had gone, for they were gazing at a picture so beautiful that for a moment they forgot themselves and their gifts, almost forgot the Princess Swallow Wings herself. Each of them felt, for that moment, as if he were a boy again, a boy standing in a perfect garden, while the winds whispered secrets in his ears and the sunshine was full of golden hopes.

"Who brought this gift?" asked the King, and no one answered, while all looked around the room for the artist or the owner.

Karl had not signed his name to his picture, but the Princess knew at once whose hand had painted it.

"He has won the prize. Let him be sent for," commanded the King, and no one noticed that the Princess slipped out of the room, determined that she herself should bring the news to Karl.

And so it happened that while the sunset colours filled the sky, Karl, standing alone in his brown, empty garden, felt a touch upon

his arm, and turning beheld, to his amazement, Princess Swallow Wings, her face as radiant as the gems around her neck.

Slowly, with her eyes upon his face, she made a low, deep courtesy.

"You have won the prize," she said, giving him her hand; "no picture can equal yours; it has brought happiness to all who have seen it. And to me you have brought—yourself."

Karl did not bow low before her this time; he kissed her hand instead, and together they walked through the sunset glow to Storm Swallow Castle, where they were married without delay.

But they did not live in the castle; no indeed, they lived in the village, and the Princess had at last her heart's desire, for she worked every day in the garden until, with the artist fairies' help, it blossomed as it had years before.

Deep eaves were added to the cottage, and wide chimneys, for of course the swallows came too, and Karl painted the most beautiful pictures that had ever been seen.

Some were of the Princess in the garden, some of swallows flying low over green hillsides to announce the coming of a storm, and the most lovely one of all, painted some years afterwards, was of a ring of children dancing among the flowers, while the swallows flew above their heads, and underground—even if no one could see them—the little, brown artist fairies capered for joy.

A ring of children dancing among the flowers, and underground, the little brown artist fairies.

X

PRINCESS WHITE WINGS AND THE KNIGHT OF THE ROBIN REDBREAST

ONCE upon a time there was a land where every knight and lady, prince and princess, was called by the name of a bird, or butterfly, or other winged creature. A circle of the little creatures after whom they were named flew before them wherever they went, so that when a lady saw a bee, or bird, or butterfly come fluttering through the door of her castle she would exclaim, "Prince Golden Bee,—or Lady Bluebird,—or Princess Butterfly,—is coming to call. Open the gates wide to let the dear thing in."

That was much pleasanter than using visiting cards, was it not? It was at the christening party of each baby that the Fairy Godmother chose the name. No one knew whether the fairies chose names which seemed

to be like the babies, or whether from that time on the children grew to look like the winged creatures at which they smiled in their cradles, toddled after when they began to walk, loved and guarded as they grew older. And not only did they look like them, but the knights and ladies *were* so like their names that the Lady Butterflies seemed to flutter along, the Bird Princes darted, or soared, or hovered, according to the habit of the bird they were named for, and Prince Bumble Bee always hummed a tune that sounded like "Buzz—buzz," as he walked with a rolling step along the streets.

This country was ruled over by a proud sovereign called King Kingfisher, whose bushy black hair and red gold crown were very like the crested head of the birds which flew before him. He looked very haughty also, as they do, and his voice, like their song, was harsh and commanding. His wife was Queen Golden Butterfly, and she, like the gorgeous winged creatures which surrounded her, wore black and gold robes of

great magnificence, and swept them back and forth to win the admiration she was always seeking.

They had three children; Prince Dragon Fly, Princess White Wings,—her sign was a circle of lovely white butterflies with pale blue markings,—and Baby Princess June Bug. The Prince was the only one who was like his parents. He was proud and brilliant, loved admiration and was vexed with his sister White Wings, because she spent her time playing with the flowers in the royal garden instead of parading with the King and Queen through their kingdom. Princess June Bug was just a fat, floppy baby at the beginning of our story, always fussing over everything, a bother to every one; but later on you shall see how useful she became.

Now think of the sweetest, loveliest princess you can imagine, her golden hair braided with blue ribbons, her skin as white and soft as a butterfly's wing, dressed in white robes which fluttered as she walked. Then you have a picture of Princess White Wings. From sunrise to sunset she was among the

flowers in the garden, bending over them, enjoying their fragrance, and listening to their sweet songs, which only butterflies or fairy princesses can hear or understand. She looked like a big white butterfly herself as she drifted from flower to flower, her circle of attendant butterflies around her, and it was no wonder that many a young prince who caught sight of her as he rode by, begged the King to give him his eldest daughter for his bride.

But the Princess was too busy with her flowers and butterflies to think of anything else, and as no one of the princes was very rich or powerful, the King was willing to tell them all to "ride away!"

But one evening, as White Wings stood in the silver moonlight among tall, white lilies, King Bat came riding by on a coal black charger. He was dressed in soft, black velvet, a train of black-robed attendants followed him, and before him flew hundreds of great bats forming a zigzag line as they skimmed from one side of the road to the other. The King rode to and fro after them, his black cloak blown back until it looked like a bat's

wings, and the whole procession moved as silently and swiftly as the winged creatures they followed.

But suddenly King Bat caught sight of Princess White Wings standing in her fragrant, moon-lit garden, and he drew rein. For several moments he gazed at her with wonder, and then, whispering to his bats to fly ahead and announce his approach, he rode up to the castle gates. He found them swinging open to welcome him, and King Kingfisher standing within, anxious to show how honoured he felt at the visit of such a powerful guest.

When the evening banquet was served, King Bat gazed so steadily with his beady black eyes at little White Wings, who sat opposite him, that she shivered with fear, and could not touch a morsel, not even the golden honey which was her favourite food. But she was still more frightened afterwards, for the black King told her father that he wished to marry his daughter; and when King Kingfisher bowed his proud head in consent, and Queen Butterfly rustled her gorgeous robes

with pleasure, the Princess fainted quite away.

When she recovered, she found herself with her ladies in her tower chamber overlooking the garden, while her butterflies flew frantically to and fro, trying with their fluttering wings to fan their mistress back to life. After that White Wings made believe to fall asleep so that her ladies would leave her. But as soon as she was alone, she ran to the window, climbed out of it and down to the ground on the strong rose vine which bore her safely, while its snowy blossoms whispered words of comfort in her ear.

She planned to run away. To where, she did not know. Her only thought was to fly from the Bat King with his beady eyes and dreary robes. But first she flitted through the garden, bidding farewell to all the flowers, who kissed her and told her not to fear.

"Seek the wild woods and the quiet country," they said; "there you will be safe from cruel kings, and there you will find friends like us; they are not as finely dressed as we are, but they are far more fragrant."

"Yes," sang the rose, "you will find my country cousin there, wild rose, the sweetest flower in the world."

"Yes," echoed the tall white lilies, "you will see our cousins in the fields. They are not as stately as we are, for the sun kissed them and they became golden lilies, dancing to greet the dawn."

"Yes, oh, yes," whispered a bed of double, purple violets, "there are beds of white wood violets, which look like you, dear White Wings, watching for you beside the streams. They are hidden from passers-by, but they are so fragrant that your butterflies will find them."

"Good-bye, dear, dear flowers," sighed the Princess, as she hurried away down hundreds of stone steps, through parks and woods, while the moon sank and the stars grew pale, and in the east there appeared a streak of gold, the approach of sunrise.

Poor White Wings was tired and discouraged. She had lost her way, and when the palace parks were left behind she stumbled over roots, and the brambles tore her white

robes and her delicate skin. She sat down upon a rock, her butterflies perching sadly upon her shoulders, and was just about to burst into tears when something wonderful happened.

The streak of gold in the east had been growing broader and brighter, and as the sun itself rose gloriously over the horizon, a song, sweeter, gayer, and more cheery than anything the Princess had ever dreamed of, broke forth from a dark tree near by. Quick lilting tunes, and whistles, and warbles filled the air, and when White Wings sprang to her feet, laughing for joy, she saw a flash of red breasts, as a flock of merry robins rose above the tree and flew towards her. And after them—it was almost too good to be true—walked a splendid youth, the Knight of the Robin Redbreast.

His silver armour glittered in the sunlight, and over it, upon his breast, hung a splendid crimson emblem, like a robin's red breast,—only more dazzling. He carried his silver helmet in his hand and the sun shone upon his brown hair and honest face, while he

whistled a tune that was even merrier and more bewitching than the song of his attending robins.

White Wings fluttered over the grass towards him, the butterflies circling around her head, and when they reached each other the Knight fell upon one knee and kissed her hand.

"I have waited so long for you," he cried; "every day at dawn I have whistled here to welcome you. For although the proud King, your father, has tried to forget it, the same fairy godmother named each of us, and foretold that some morning the Princess White Wings would come fluttering into the farmlands of the Robin Knight to be rescued from some great peril."

Then White Wings told her story, and the Knight took her little hand and led her over pastures and beside streams, until in a deep wood they came to a tiny hut, the home of his aunt, Dame Lady Bird.

"Here you can rest in safety," he said. "Every morning I will come and sing to you, and during the day my aunt will care

for you." And such a kind, little lady as the Dame turned out to be! She was dressed in a scarlet petticoat, a black bodice and a tall, black hat, and her smile and voice were as bright and cheerful as the swarm of tiny lady birds who flew around her.

The Princess was happier there than she had ever been. Life at the palace had been stately and solemn, and here in the woods it was merry and gay. Every morning the Knight sang his joyous song beneath her window, and then he showed her lovely hidden nooks in woods and fields, mossy dells full of white violets, fields waving with golden lilies, and hedges full of briar roses. After he had returned to his work,—he ploughed the fields of his great farm and tended his flocks, even though he was a knight,—Dame Lady Bird taught the Princess how to spin and weave, churn and cook.

"You will need to know these things if you should ever become a farmer's wife," she said, with a twinkle in her eye.

But one morning when the Knight came

as usual at sunrise, he found the cottage door open and the rooms empty. Around the house the ground was trampled and torn as if many horses had pawed it. Redbreast followed the hoof marks until he reached, alas, the Bat King's gloomy, black castle, over the roof of which hundreds of bats were circling and swooping. The gates were guarded by tall figures in flapping black hats and cloaks, and the Knight saw that there was no chance of his forcing his way past them.

In the meantime White Wings, when she refused with a shudder to marry King Bat, had been thrown into a dungeon of his castle, and Dame Lady Bird, who amused the King with her bright, quick ways, had been set free in the palace.

Every day the Princess was brought from her cell to the royal hall where the King sat upon his black throne, and asked sternly if she had changed her mind. When she said "No," she was led back to the damp and miserable dungeon. What would have happened to her I do not know if Dame Lady

Bird had not been busy scheming. She was so friendly with the King that he took her into his confidence and asked her to help him win the Princess.

"If you take my advice," she answered briskly, "you will not see her or let her leave the dungeon for a week. Feed her on bread and water, and at the end of that time things will have changed."

And she spoke truly, for after a week of starvation and darkness White Wings was so worn and thin that you would never have known she was a princess. Even her hair was hidden, bundled up in an old rag, and her white gown hung limp and gray around her.

On her breast she wore a tiny bunch of white violets which one of the Knight's robins had dropped between the dungeon bars, and around their stems she had found a bit of paper bearing these words, "As you face the King stand near the open window and do not fear."

"Cheer up, cheer up," sang the robin as he dropped the fragrant little nosegay, and al-

though White Wings' knees shook beneath her as she stood before King Bat, the perfume of the violets and the remembrance of the robin's song gave her courage. But, just as Dame Lady Bird had hoped, the King was horrified at the sight of the miserable looking little maiden.

"Can this be the winsome Princess with the golden locks and floating raiment?" he cried. "She looks more fitted to be a beggar maid than a queen!"

"Exactly!" agreed the Dame. "Now, how would you like this gay lady, instead, for your bride?" And she stepped aside to show the Princess June Bug, whom she had sent for and who had been hiding behind her. She was short and fat but her black hair was very splendid, her brown velvet robes long and rich, and when she stepped forward to greet the King, she flopped so comically that the solemn attendants all smiled, and even the King himself was amused. But when she spoke, he not only smiled, he fairly chuckled, for she wasn't a bit afraid of him, and she chattered and

laughed and ran flopping around the room until every one forgot White Wings while they watched her sister. One window was wide open. White Wings stole to it, and then—it was all done in such a flash that no one quite knew how it happened,—but hundreds and hundreds of brown wings and red breasts flew through the window, formed a kind of magic carpet on which White Wings seated herself, and bore her away,—away,—over the roof of the black castle, over tree tops, fields and streams, until they alighted on the door-step of the Redbreast Knight's farm, where he was waiting with open arms to receive her.

Dame Lady Bird still enjoys telling how the Bat King married Princess June Bug within a week. But the white butterflies, who told this tale to the Shepherd, love to whisper of the marriage of White Wings to the Knight of the Robin Redbreast, which took place that very day, Parson Blackbird performing the ceremony, as they all stood knee-deep in a field of white clover. "And you may be sure," the butterflies add, "that all

the Princess' beauty returned to her tenfold, her golden hair waved in the wind, her robes fluttered, and her head was crowned with a wreath of fragrant white violets."

XI

THE DISCONTENTED MERMAID

A BEAUTIFUL young mermaid, named Curly Wave, once sat upon a rock, flapping her silvery tail mournfully to and fro, as she sang a sad little song.

Presently a sea-gull's white wings flashed over the waves, and the bird alighted upon the rock where Curly Wave was sitting. She seemed very glad to see him. She stopped singing and flapping so forlornly and stroked the gull's soft feathers as he settled down beside her. Then, while the big, red sun sank into the ocean before them, the bird told the mermaid all he had seen that day.

Every evening for a month he had done this. He had first seen Curly Wave sitting on a rock in the moonlight, combing her yellow hair, and had stopped and asked her to sing to him. In return for her strange, sweet music he had told her tales of the city. He told her of harbours full of great ships with

their sails furled and their masts standing up dark and bare against the sky. Curly Wave would never have recognized them, he said, for when she saw them they were splendid bird-like things which flew past under full sail, or drifted slowly along on a calm sea, their sails flapping like broken wings. He told her about the people he saw in the city streets beside the wharves; men and women and children who worked and played there.

The sailors, he said, left the big ships as soon as they had anchored, and hurried to the homes where wives and children watched for them. None of the wives were as pretty as Curly Wave, the sea-gull declared, but the sailors seemed very glad to see them, and the children hung on their mothers' skirts and cuddled in their arms.

Curly Wave had never seen a child or a woman. Her mother was the great, beautiful ocean and she had been born in a curly, blue wave, which was the reason for her name. Her sisters and brothers were the other little mermaids and shining fishes, and her best friends were the sun and the moon. She

loved them all and was very happy until the sea-gull came and tried to amuse her.

Then she longed to leave the beautiful ocean which had sung her to sleep with murmuring lullabies, and waked her with a joyous roar ever since she was a baby.

"I am tired," she said, "of playing with fishes and mermaids. I want to be a real lady with feet and skirts, I want to play with human children and see the ships when they fold their wings."

Again and again the sea-gull told her she couldn't swim on the city streets, of course she couldn't walk upon her tail, and it wasn't nearly as nice there as in mid-ocean.

But Curly Wave just flapped her tail crossly and exclaimed, "You are as silly as a jelly-fish when you talk like that. I won't listen to you."

The moon was very sorry when she saw the little mermaid pouting instead of singing and swimming gaily, and sang a song to her which seemed to mean :

"Where we are loved we belong, my dear,
Where we are loved we belong."

The little fishes wriggled their tails to make her laugh, the waves lapped caressingly against the rock, the sea-gull hung strings of pink shells around her neck and begged her to be his bride, while the oysters opened to give her their choicest pearls, and the ocean sang her its sweetest songs.

But Curly Wave looked more and more miserable, and when no one was looking she was always trying to stand on the tip of her tail. She thought that if she could learn that, she would be a lady. It hurt dreadfully at first, but after a time she was able to balance herself so that she could almost walk in a funny, hopping kind of way. Then, as a great surprise, she showed the sea-gull what she had learned.

"Take me with you," she begged, "to the city streets," and he could not bear to refuse her.

It was a cloudy night, so the moon and the fishes did not see her go, and only the ocean sobbed and moaned as the gull bore Curly Wave on his strong wings to the harbour so far away. There he left her, promising to

come back the next night to see if she wanted to go home.

The mermaid was dressed in a shimmering gown of pale green seaweed, so long that it quite covered up her tail. Her hair was twined with pearls and her shell necklace was almost as dainty as her pink cheeks. She looked like a very lovely lady, and if the night had not been so dark, many people would have stared hard at the beautiful stranger with the funny, hopping walk.

As it was, she could look through the windows into the lighted houses without being seen, and for a time she enjoyed herself tremendously. She laughed when she saw the sailors smoking pipes beside the fire, and she smiled as she watched the mothers walking on two feet around their houses. They looked very strange and clumsy to Curly Wave, but she loved to watch them rock their babies in cradles and to listen to the strange stories they told the older children. The stories were about queer things Curly Wave had never heard of, giants, and fairies, and curious animals, and she found herself wishing

for one of the moon's tales or the ocean's songs.

Then she heard a mother tell a story about a mermaid. "That is a silly thing to tell a story about," she thought. "Why don't they talk instead about trailing skirts and smoking pipes?"

All night she wandered up and down the streets. Her tail began to hurt and she grew tired and lonely, for the narrow streets seemed dark and ugly to one who was used to the broad path of moonlight on the great ocean.

Then suddenly she found herself in front of a window from which streamed a brilliant light. Music also poured out of it and within many people were dancing. "What fun that must be!" thought Curly Wave. "How much finer the young men look than the porpoises I dance with, and what beautiful trains the ladies wear!" But although she watched them dance for a long time they did nothing, it seemed to her, but go around and around.

The ocean balls began that way, just for

an introduction, and then they dove and circled, sprang laughing to the top of the waves, rolled forward with them or darted high up above their shining crests. For supper they had sparkling sea-foam and pink seaweed, but these curious two-footed people ate plates full of hard ice-cream and cakes that looked like dry sponges. It all seemed very stupid to the mermaid and she would have fallen asleep as she sat leaning against the window sill, if a big policeman had not come along and told her quite crossly to "move on."

She struggled to her tired little tail and hopped slowly down towards the wharf. There she saw the ships as she had longed to see them, at anchor, with their sails furled. At first she did not know they were ships, but when the sun rose and shone upon them she saw their bowsprits as well as their bare masts, and she was bitterly disappointed. "They look ugly and forlorn," she cried, and curling up upon a pile of rope she burst into tears. She longed to see again their great sail wings skimming over the clear blue sea ;

thinking of wings made her remember the sea-gull, and she wondered if he would find her alive when he came for her that night.

Then she heard a gull's loud cry above her head, and saw a flutter of white wings as her sea-gull swooped down beside her. He had to perch upon a broken barrel instead of the rock in mid-ocean where they used to meet, and there was as much difference between the barrel and the wind-swept rock as there was between Curly Wave the mermaid, and Curly Wave after she had been a lady for one night.

Her seaweed dress was torn and faded, the pearls had fallen from her hair, her eyes were dim with tears and her poor little tail was so tired that it couldn't even flap.

"Will you come back now?" begged the sea-gull. "The sun missed you when he rose this morning, the fishes won't play without you, the waves are sighing for you, and I cannot bear to fly across the ocean and see the rock without any mermaid upon it to welcome me."

"Gladly, gladly will I go home," said the

mermaid, "and I will marry you at once, dear sea-gull, if you will make me one promise." Of course the sea-gull said he would promise anything for such a reward, and Curly Wave cried, "Never, never again, let me leave the place where I belong!"

When the moon rose that night she found much excitement going around the rock. The fishes were all jumping for joy, the ocean's waves rose and broke, and sang and murmured, stars twinkled brightly in the sky, and the little mermaid, dressed in new pearls and shiny seaweed, sang love songs to the sea-gull whom she had just married.

The moon smiled to herself. "They are all singing my song," she said, and indeed in their different ways the fishes and ocean, the mermaid and stars and sea-gull were all singing

"Where we are loved we belong, my dear,
Where we are loved we belong."

XII

GREAT KING EAGLE

ONCE upon a time there lived an old King who was so selfish and stingy that his subjects hated him and called him King Hawk. Every time he saw a flock of fat, woolly sheep, or a field ripening for harvest, or an orchard laden with fine fruit, he would say, "No one has a right to own that except a grand king like myself. From this moment that flock"—or field—or orchard—"is mine, and the man who owned it can feel that he has added to the possessions of his King."

That was cold comfort to the man who had planned to feed his family with food from the fields and clothe them with wool from the sheep!

No wonder the people, who often watched the greedy hawks steal their fattest ducks and chickens, called the King after the cruel

birds. The King heard the name, but instead of making him angry it rather pleased him, for he supposed his subjects thought of the hawk's fierce, black eyes, and his proud way of soaring through the air.

Gradually King Hawk had grabbed everything in the kingdom that was worth owning and sold it so as to fill his chests with shining, gold pieces. He lived in a dreary, old castle, and his one pleasure was to count the clinking gold, like the old miser that he was.

There was just one person he loved more than his money, and that was his only son. His wife had died when the Prince was a baby and the King had brought the boy up to be like him and grab everything he wanted. The attending lords and ladies did not think it very pretty when the baby Prince leaned across the table and snatched bits of cake or pastry from their plates, but the King only roared with laughter and cried, "You are just like your father, my son; isn't there something else you want?" For answer the child would tear a shining bracelet from a lady's arm or a ring from her finger, and to please

the King she would have to smile and make believe she was amused.

But when the Prince was growing into a young man the old King died, and the crown and kingdom, as well as the grim castle and its chests of shining gold, belonged to the spoilt Prince.

He would have been a nice boy if he had been brought up better. He was tall and strong, with fearless brown eyes, and a clear, ringing voice. But when the people saw him riding through the kingdom with his father's crown upon his head, they cowered within their poor, dingy houses.

"He is handsomer and prouder than his father," they said. "We will call him King Eagle. What will he take from us?"

But although the young King rode far and searched carefully he could find nothing in his kingdom but poor people, bare fields and muddy streams. Quite disappointed he rode back to his castle, and opening the chests of gold told his attendants to travel to distant lands and buy, since he could not grab them from strangers, costly tapestries and pictures,

carved furniture and splendid robes. As he told them to buy also fine clothes for themselves, they were quite willing to carry out his orders.

The castle was transformed. Glowing tapestries covered the old stone walls, soft cushioned furniture filled the rooms, and crystal vases holding fragrant flowers were everywhere, even in the winter, when the price of a single rose would have fed a hungry family. Best of all the castle was full of music. Young King Eagle sang so beautifully that if his subjects had heard him they might have changed his name. Instead of an eagle's harsh cry his voice was as clear and sweet as a lark's. But his eyes were like an eagle's and he had a proud way of carrying his head as if all the world was made for him, which was very like the bird after whom he was named.

The subjects, hungry, cold and forlorn now that their possessions had been taken from them, never came near enough to the castle to hear the music. They were too busy trying to keep from starving to think of such a

thing. But night after night musicians and singers met in the great hall lighted by hundreds of candles, and after feasting on delicious food served in golden dishes they played and sang. The young King's clear voice led them all until it sounded as sweetly as if the forest birds were singing their lovely songs in the flower-scented castle.

One cold night while the halls echoed with music a loud knock came at the castle door. When it was opened the snow came swirling into the large hall where the company was gathered, and half hidden in snow and sleet stood the figure of a shepherd, his crook in one hand, while with his other he drew his old cloak about him.

"Close the door, send the beggar away!" commanded the King, but there was a strange expression in the Shepherd's eyes which made the attendants fall back, startled.

"Will no one obey my orders?" cried the angry King, and he sprang up, intending to slam the door in the stranger's face.

But before he reached it the Shepherd had drawn a flute from beneath his cloak, and

raising it to his lips played a melody so sweet and gay, so tender and yet so joyous that King Eagle stood still, enchanted.

"That is the most bewitching tune I have ever heard," he cried, when the last note died away. "You must stay here and teach it to me to-night."

"That tune cannot be learnt in a single night," answered the Shepherd. "If you really want to learn it you must work hard. If you care enough for that meet me an hour before sunrise upon the hill behind the castle."

Then he was gone, and except for a few snowflakes melting upon the hearth there were no signs of his having been there. But the gay crowd was quiet; their finest songs seemed dull and poor after the exquisite melody they had heard, and yet strangely enough not one of them could remember a single note of the Shepherd's music.

Soon they separated for the night, but the King could not sleep. He tossed to and fro until when the great tower clock struck an hour before dawn he hurried behind the

castle. There in the snow and darkness he found the Shepherd waiting for him.

"Teach me the tune now," demanded the King. "I kept trying to remember it all night; I can think of nothing else," and he shivered as he pulled his fur-lined mantle about him.

"As I told you, you must work hard before you can learn that tune," answered the Shepherd. "Are you ready to go wherever I wish?"

When the King, puzzled at his own meekness, said that he was, the Shepherd played another tune upon his flute. It sounded like the flapping of wings, the quick, upward flight of a bird, the scream of an eagle. Before it was finished the King's cloak fell from him, his arms changed to wings, his feet to claws, and at the last scream he sprang into the air, a great, brown eagle, uttering that bird's harsh cry. But beneath his feathers he was still the young King.

By his side flew the Shepherd, his old gray cloak forming wings, and together they

soared over fields and hills until they reached the city.

"Look below with your clear bird's eyes," said the Shepherd, "and tell me what you see."

"I see miserable hovels," answered the eagle, "and through the windows I see pale children and tired men and women. The children seem to be crying; they are seated around breakfast tables, but I see no breakfast there. Is that why the children weep? Now I see a man going out to work. He has a crust of bread in his hand and he looks at it hungrily. But he is not eating it; no, he has given it to a crying child, and the boy has snatched it without a word of thanks and is gulping it down like a hungry dog. Selfish, ungrateful child!"

"Did you never see a boy snatch before?" asked the Shepherd, and suddenly a new feeling stirred in King Eagle's heart, a feeling of shame.

"Those are my subjects," he said, startled, "and they are hungry because my father snatched their flocks and fields from them!"

Swiftly they flew back to the castle. When they reached the hill they alighted and the King returned to his own form, but he did not ask again to learn the tune. Instead he hurried to the castle and gave orders for great kettles of soup to be made, and hundreds of loaves of bread baked. When they were ready he called his lords and ladies and they followed him out of the castle, each bearing loaves of bread and bowls of soup. They thought it was a new game and rode forth joking and laughing.

But when they reached the city their smiles died away, for the King insisted upon each dainty lady and proud lord entering a miserable house and leaving the food and a gold piece beside it upon the table, with the promise that they should have food every day until their fields could be bought back and planted.

It was a quiet, puzzled train that returned with the King to the castle. "What has happened to him?" they whispered. "Did the Shepherd who came last night bewitch him?"

The next morning, as the Shepherd had arranged, the King again met him upon the hillside before sunrise.

"May I learn the tune to-day?" he asked humbly. But the Shepherd answered, "Not yet, oh, King; there is still much for you to learn before you can carry that melody."

So again he played the eagle's music, and again the King took the great bird's form and flew with the Shepherd over the bare fields to the city.

"What do you see this morning?" asked the flute-player.

"I see children leaving well-filled breakfast tables to run to the fireplaces. They are stamping their feet and rubbing their hands as if they were cold. Alas, it is no wonder, for there is no fire in the chimneys. Now I see a mother who has taken off her cape, although her gown beneath it is in scanty rags. She has wrapped it about a crying child who runs off without thinking how cold her mother must be. Heartless girl!"

"Where did you leave your fur cloak?" asked the Shepherd, and without another

word they flew back to the hillside. Although the eagle became a king again and the day was cold, he did not put on his fur-lined cloak. He threw it over his shoulder and ran to the castle. There every closet was searched, and again the court rode forth, bearing wraps of all kinds. When they reached the city the King found the poor, cold mother and wrapped her in his royal mantle, and the lords and ladies, who were beginning to enjoy this work as much as if it were a game, left blankets and cloaks everywhere. They also left a gold piece at each house with which the family could buy back their flock of woolly sheep.

The third morning the King met the Shepherd again. Streaks of red and gold in the sky showed the approach of the sun, a little bird was singing, and there was a freshness in the air like the coming of spring.

"Am I ready to learn the melody yet, friend Shepherd?" asked the King.

"Not quite," answered the Shepherd; "there is one more lesson for you to learn, the best of all."

He played the eagle's music, the King became a great bird, and they soared together beneath the brightening sky to the city streets. Then they flew down to an open door, and there, to his surprise, the King's feathers left him and he stood upon the threshold in his own form. Only the Shepherd had thrown his old gray cloak over the royal robes so that no one could have guessed it was the King.

Within the cottage a woman bent sorrowfully over a bed where a sick child lay moaning with pain and fever. The woman saw the King's shadow upon the white wall, and she looked up eagerly.

"Are you a doctor?" she asked. "Can you quiet my child? The fever has kept him tossing for so long that he will die if he cannot sleep."

King Eagle had never seen a sick child before, and he had no idea what to do for him. Only he felt sorry, sorrier than he had ever felt about anything in his life, and he longed to help. He turned to the Shepherd to ask his advice, but the Shepherd had gone.

Then an idea came to the King. "Perhaps I could sing the little one to sleep," he said. So sitting beside the bed he sang a lullaby, so sweet and soothing that the fever left the boy, and turning quietly he fell into a deep slumber.

When he awoke the sun was high in the sky, and the cheerful light filled the room. The King still sat by the bedside in case he should be needed, and the child took his hand, whispering, "Sing again. I am well now, but I am so weak and sad; sing to make me happy."

Then outside the door the King heard the Shepherd playing upon his flute the melody he had so longed to learn, and as easily as if he had known it all his life, King Eagle picked up the tune with his clear, joyous voice and sang and sang, until the colour came back to the child's pale cheeks and his eyes sparkled.

"I am happy again!" he cried. "I want to dance and sing. Teach me that tune."

"You will know it some day without being taught, little brother," said the King. "When

you have learnt the lesson your King has learnt the tune will run in your heart always."

That evening as the sun set, the lords and ladies did not sing in the castle. They sang instead in the city streets, led by King Eagle; and the people and children, well fed and well warmed, sang also, until as the last rays of the sun lighted the old town it seemed as if it were a fairy city, full of comfort and warmth, colour and music and happy love.

XIII

THE ENCHANTED WOOD

THERE once lived a terrible dragon who breathed forth fire and smoke, whose red eyes gleamed like two furnaces, and whose tail was so strong that one little flap would knock down a stone house. It was no wonder that when the thunder of his coming was heard in the distance men and women rushed into their homes, dragging their children after them, and bolted and barred the doors. Soon he would come tearing up the village street, half hidden by the flaming cloud of smoke which arose from his nostrils. But the people who lived in the cottages need not have feared; he hardly glanced at them, for he was making a collection of princes and princesses.

He would rush up to the gate of a palace and demand that one of the king's sons or

daughters should be brought to him immediately. If there was any delay, he would flap his tail and a wing of the palace would come tumbling down. Or if a king absolutely refused to give up his child, the dragon would flap his tail again and the whole palace would shake to pieces. This did not happen often, for the news of his habits spread over the country, and sometimes when he reached a castle gate he would find a prince or princess tied there waiting for him, with these words printed in large letters over the gateway, "Please do not flap your tail."

Then he would laugh, and the roar of that noise was like a great wave breaking upon rocks. And he would throw the royal child upon his back and tear off, the poor prince or princess clinging to his slippery scales, trying not to faint with terror.

But when he reached his cave he did not hurt his prisoners. Instead, he merely offered them a cup of what looked like clear water, and they were always so exhausted with their journey that they were thankful to moisten their lips. But as soon as they had

drunk a few drops, they forgot their homes, their parents, and their past lives; and the next feeling that came to them was of being comfortably covered up in brown bark, while their feet became roots, and their arms branches. For the dragon turned them all into trees!

Behind his cave stood a beautiful wood, an enchanted wood, for every noble oak and dainty white birch, every stately elm and lovely maple was an enchanted prince or princess. They did not mind the life. Having forgotten their past existence they had nothing to sorrow over, and they loved stretching out their roots below the mossy earth and lifting their branches to the warm sun and the whispering winds. The wind's song was the only one they ever heard, for the dragon did not allow any bird to enter the enchanted wood, lest its music might stir memories in the hearts of the trees.

Every month, when the new moon hung like a thread of silver in the sky, the dragon left his cave and went in search of another royal prisoner, and while he was gone he

allowed his captives to regain for a few hours their own forms. There was a tearing open of trunks, and from each one stepped a prince or a princess, their silver armour and trailing robes brighter and fresher than ever, while their forms and faces were far younger and more beautiful than when they had been enchanted.

Sometimes it is good for people to turn into trees for a time!

Then they would wander together through the wood, talking in low, hushed voices, for the dragon's power was still over them, and as they could not step beyond the border of the trees, they did not see nor remember anything connected with their past life. Their low voices sounded like the whispering of leaves, and all they talked about was the beauty of the sky, the warmth of the soft moss, or the latest song of the wind.

Gradually they would drift apart two by two, a prince and a princess, and always they were the two who as trees grew side by side. So that although they enjoyed walking hand in hand beneath the starry sky, it was not

very different from waving their branches together in the sunshine, or rustling softly with their leaves in the twilight.

Before midnight there was a shaking of the earth as the dragon approached. Then the princes and princesses returned to their tree forms, and before the latest captive stretched out his roots and waved his branches for the first time, the wood looked as quiet and natural as any ordinary forest.

One day, however, the dragon brought back a brave little Princess who did not drink a drop from the cup of forgetfulness. She had heard of magic potions which did strange things to people, and she had no desire to be enchanted. Besides she had promised to marry a handsome young Prince and she was determined that by some means or other she would return to him safe and sound. So she merely touched her lips to the edge of the cup, and when she became a strong little cedar tree she remembered perfectly all her past life and spent her time wondering how she could return to it.

At last a new moon hung in the sky, the

dragon rushed away and the trees opened as the princes and princesses stepped from them. Among them was the Cedar Princess, and when the others drifted away in pairs whispering contentedly, she stood in the centre of the wood and spoke in a loud, clear voice.

"What are you all doing?" she exclaimed. "Why don't you run away from this place and return to your homes where your friends think you have been gobbled up by the dragon?"

The company stood still and gazed at her with astonishment.

"What do you mean?" they whispered back. "This is our home and here are our friends."

The Cedar Princess felt like shaking them.

"Don't you remember anything?" she asked. "Can't you even remember your mothers and fathers?"

At the word "remember" the company swayed towards her.

"Remember?" they whispered, "remember? That is a strange word; it makes us long for something we had forgotten. Tell us, little Princess, what is it?"

"You all wear golden crowns, so you must have lived in palaces and been loved by kings and queens," answered the Princess. "The dragon carried you away and gave you a magic cup to drink from. You were all foolish enough to drink it, or you would not be wandering here instead of trying to escape."

"The dragon, the magic cup," echoed her companions; "surely we do begin to remember. But how, little Princess, can we escape?"

The Cedar Princess ran to the edge of the wood but she could go no farther. When she tried to put her foot beyond she found it as impossible as if she were lifting it against a stone wall.

"If only my Prince Fearless were here," she cried; "he would know what to do!"

Then beyond the wood the Princess heard the clear whistle which her Prince always gave to show his approach, and his form loomed up in the moonlight at the edge of the wood. He had traced her to the dragon's cave which stood there, but the monster's magic prevented his going farther. In

vain the Princess called to him; he could neither see nor hear her. The moving forms looked to him merely like the swaying of trees and no sound could pass beyond them.

The Princess reached for the writing tablets hanging at her side and wrote hastily: "I am here, a cedar tree in the dragon's enchanted wood. Find my fairy godmother, ask her what to do, and come to me at the next new moon." She threw the note high in the air. Prince Fearless saw it flutter, caught it, and sprang back, just as the Princess and her companions heard the thunderous sound of the returning monster, and fled back to become trees. They waved their branches however in a distressed, puzzled manner as if they had lost their old content with the forest life.

Before sunrise Prince Fearless had climbed the mountain to the tiny hut where the old fairy godmother lived. When she heard of the Princess' disaster she sighed and shook her head sadly.

"Three things must be found before the dragon's enchantment can be broken," she

said. "Only the birds can withstand his magic, so a feather must be taken from the mysterious white bird which will change the one who brings it into the same form. A flask of water must be carried from the stream of truth to anoint the monster's eyes and make him see things as they really are, and even then only a leaf from the singing tree can transform the princes and princesses to their natural forms. These three things are in fairy-land, and the way there is hard and dangerous."

"I am not afraid," cried Prince Fearless; "show me the path that I may start at once."

Again the old fairy shook her head and sighed.

"Only one who has been a tree in the enchanted wood can accomplish these tasks," she said. "My godchild herself must risk the perils of the journey while you can only take her place as a cedar tree that the dragon may not know what has happened."

Then she gave him a pair of tiny wings to attach to his shoes.

"When the next new moon hangs low in

the sky these will carry you into the magic wood," she said, "and they will also help the Princess over the first part of her journey. After that I cannot assist her; the road to fairy-land is one which every one must find for himself."

So when the tiny crescent of the new moon shone in the sky Prince Fearless tied the wings around his shoes, and half ran, half flew to the enchanted wood. Over the magic line he bounded and there to his joy he beheld his dear little Princess, her brown hair as curly and rippling and her dark eyes as deep and tender as before the dragon had carried her away.

Sorrowfully he told her the fairy's news. "If only I could go for you," he sighed. But the Cedar Princess smiled bravely and asked him to tie the wings to her feet. Then with a kiss for him and a wave of her hand to her companions, she was off as the Prince had come, half running, half flying over a strange road which carried her miles and miles away from anywhere.

She travelled all night, but she was not a

bit tired, and when, as the sun rose, the wings dropped from her feet she trudged on cheerfully. Presently, however, she heard the piteous cry of a hurt animal, and following the sound she found a rabbit caught in a trap. She released it and the bunny rubbed up against her to show his gratitude before jumping off through the woods.

The Princess returned to the road and walked on, while the sun rose high above her head and she grew tired and thirsty. Then she found a little stream near the roadside and she stooped eagerly over it for a drink. But just as her lips touched the clear water she heard, "flap—flap," and looking around saw a small fish gasping on the bank, flapping its tail slowly to show how miserable it was.

"You poor little thing," cried the Princess, as she picked up the shining fish and threw it back into the stream. It popped up its head once to say "Thank you," and darted off among the stones.

After a cool drink, the Princess felt better and she trudged on until, lying upon the road in front of her, she saw a tiny white bird. Its

wing was broken and it lay with closed eyes, half dead. The Princess picked it up tenderly, bound the broken wing with her dainty handkerchief, and when it opened its bill hungrily, fed it with wild berries. She was afraid to leave it, however, for fear of prowling animals, so she carried it gently in her hand as she walked on.

Soon the sun sank, and the air grew dark and chill. By that time she was quite worn out and when the road became a narrow path winding through a dark wood, and then stopped altogether, she was lost and frightened. She tried to walk on, but the brambles tripped her, it was almost impossible to make her way between trees and bushes, and she sat down upon a stump, wondering whether instead of reaching fairy-land she would have to die in that dreadful forest. She had almost forgotten the tiny bird she held in her hand until it gave a little flutter. Then she laid it gently upon the ground beside her and it spread its wings as if one had never been broken. But what was still stranger, the wings grew and grew until the Princess saw

a great white bird gleaming out of the darkness before her.

"Lie on my back, little maiden," said the bird, "and rest, while I carry you over this dark forest."

The Princess cuddled down in its soft feathers and the bird sprang into the air. Above the tree tops it flew and flew, while the Princess slept and the stars paled.

When morning came the Princess found herself lying upon soft moss, the forest behind her, and in front of her, alas, a great, black swamp.

There were clumps of grass and water iris growing through it, but they were too far apart for any one to reach by jumping, and between them the black mud of the swamp was deep and dangerous.

The poor Princess stood up and wrung her hands. "How can I ever cross this place!" she cried. "And yet if I do not go on I shall die here and Prince Fearless will remain a tree forever."

Then she heard a hop and a jump beside her, and looking down saw the rabbit she had

released from the trap. As she watched he grew bigger and bigger—or did she grow smaller? She could not tell, but presently they were almost the same size and the rabbit said, "Mount my back, kind little Princess, and I will carry you across this swamp."

So she climbed on his back and away he went as fast as the wind, springing from one tuft of grass to another until they reached the other side. Then he was off again, his white tail gleaming as he jumped back over the swamp and the Princess called her thanks after him.

"Now, at last," she thought, "my troubles are over."

But she had not walked far before she reached a deep, wide river. It was so wide that she could not see the other side, and as there were no signs of a boat in that lonely spot tears of disappointment filled the Princess' eyes.

Then she heard, "Swish, swish," and through the water a great fish as big as a dolphin swam towards her.

The fish said, " Close your eyes, turn around three times, and see what you will see."

"You may not recognize me," he said, "but I am the fish whose life you saved. Jump upon my back, little Princess, and I will carry you across the river without even wetting the sole of your shoe."

So over they went, and when they reached the other side the fish said, "Close your eyes, turn around three times, and see what you will see."

The Princess did as she was told, and when she opened her eyes the river and the fish had vanished and she was—in fairy-land! She was standing upon grass as green as if made of emeralds, around her were trees covered with fragrant blossoms, which shone like jewels, while in the centre of them stood a tree with leaves of gleaming silver. It was singing to itself a rustling, whispering song, and its branches bent lovingly over the stream which rippled around it. The stream sparkled as if filled with diamonds, and from it a bird was drinking, a pigeon with snow-white feathers and ruby eyes.

It was all so beautiful and yet so mysterious that the Princess was almost frightened.

Then she felt a soft animal rubbing itself against her, and looking down saw a fairy rabbit, its fur as soft as swan's down.

"Do you not remember our trip together across the swamp?" he said. "You were kind to me once and now I am going to help you again." So saying he hopped across the grass and the stream to the singing tree, from which he broke off a silver twig and brought it to the Princess.

"Guard this carefully," he said; "some day it will release Prince Fearless."

Then a tiny fish jumped in the sparkling stream. "Do you not remember how we crossed the river?" he said. "You saved my life once, and now I am going to help you again. Catch these drops of the water of truth."

The Princess picked up a crystal flask she found lying in the grass and in it she caught the drops the fish splashed up to her.

Then the pigeon flew to her and perched upon her shoulder. "Do you not remember our night's journey over the forest?" she said. "You took care of me once and now

I shall help you again. Pull out one of my feathers and put it in your curls."

The Princess did so and immediately she turned into a lovely white pigeon.

"Think of where you wish to go and you will be there," said the mysterious white bird.

The Princess fluttered her wings and said, "I wish to be in the dragon's cave," and there she was, while the great monster gnashed his ugly jaws, and fire and smoke filled the cave.

But she knew that his magic could not hurt a bird, and flying over his head she poured the water of truth upon his eyes.

"Now, we can talk sensibly," she said. "You will see things at last as they really are, and I want to ask you three questions. First, why do you carry off princes and princesses and change them into trees?"

The dragon stopped breathing forth fire and smoke and looked at her stupidly with his great red eyes.

"Why, I never thought. I don't know," he said.

"Second," continued the Princess, "do you enjoy being a fiery dragon of whom every one is afraid?"

The dragon looked puzzled.

"No, I don't suppose I do," he answered. "I don't have much fun, I know that."

"Thirdly," said the Princess, "what would you really like to be?"

The dragon thought a moment, then he said: "I have often watched old men who sit in the sun and smoke pipes. I think, no, I am sure, I would like to be an old man."

"Then," said the Princess, "why don't you use up all your magic by turning yourself into an old man?"

That seemed very reasonable to the dragon, now that he saw things clearly; and in the twinkling of an eye he had changed himself into a peaceful old man and was walking slowly towards the nearest village, contentedly smoking a pipe.

The bird Princess smiled as she watched him, and then she flew swiftly to the enchanted wood. With her twig of silver she touched every tree there, until she was sur-

rounded by princes and princesses. They laughed and chattered as they hurried away, all except Prince Fearless, who stood sadly with the white bird upon his shoulder.

"Have you brought back nothing to break the spell which holds you?" he asked. "Darling Princess, must you remain a bird always?"

The pigeon stroked his cheek with her soft wing and answered: "I have rescued you and I can live in your palace. Is that not enough to make you happy?"

"No, indeed," exclaimed the Prince. "If you must remain a bird I shall remain a tree, and you can build your nest in my branches."

So he stepped back into the cedar tree and the bark was just closing around him, when "tap, tap" came the sound of a stick, and there stood the fairy godmother, her face wreathed with smiles.

With one touch of her magic wand the pigeon had gone and in its place stood the little Princess, her brown eyes smiling, her soft hair curling around her shoulders. Joyfully Prince Fearless took her hand; they

stepped into the fairy chariot the godmother had brought, and rolled away to the happiness awaiting them.

But before the chariot flew a white bird, a pigeon. Whether it was the mysterious bird from fairy-land or not I do not know ; I only know that this is the story a white pigeon told the Shepherd and the children upon the hillside.

XIV

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DANCE

IT was Midsummer Day, and a small boy and girl sat upon the wall of a pasture, talking in low tones of the wonderful things which sometimes happened during the night of that longest day in the year.

"Dame Fancyfronde once locked her doors and filled the keyholes with fern seed," said the rosy-cheeked boy, Hans, "and in the middle of the night she heard locks turning softly all over the house, and shrill laughter. She didn't dare open her eyes for fear of offending the fairy folk by looking at them. But when she came down-stairs in the morning the fern seed was scattered over the floor, the doors stood wide open, and the milk she had set for cream had turned into big lumps of yellow gold. She tried to sell it but no one would buy it; they said it was fairy gold which would turn to ashes unless kept by the

one to whom it had been given. So she has it still."

"And old Farmer Applewood walked barefoot to the fairy spring in the forest on Midsummer night," said Buttercup, the yellow-haired girl. "He fell down many times, our grandmother says, for he was old and lame and the way is rough. But he reached the spring and drank from it, just as the fairies came out to dance. They were pleased when they saw he had hidden his eyes; if he had looked for them they would have been angry. So they splashed their tiny hands in the pool, and brought such magic into it, that after he had drunk he was straight and strong like a young man, and that is why, even now, he has such fine red cheeks and clear eyes."

The children were caring for their father's herd of cows while he harvested his crops. For many days they had driven the animals to pasture in the morning and home in the evening, sitting patiently on the wall most of the day as they watched the big herd, in case one should stray into the mud or jump over the low wall. While they watched and

waited, they heard the Shepherd's call on the hillside and knew that the other children were running to him, listening to tales of birds and fairies which they could not hear.

On Midsummer Day they felt especially lonely. The Shepherd had played a longer call than usual upon his flute, a call which was as merry as it was mysterious, and Hans and Buttercup tried to imitate the music they had heard. Hans whistled it, Buttercup sang it, over and over again, until at last it seemed as if they had almost caught the happy melody.

They clapped their hands with pleasure and then looked around puzzled. It sounded as if others were clapping, too, tiny hand claps, very soft and light. But they could see nothing except the field of red and white clover, the shady trees and the peaceful cows.

"It is nothing," said Hans; "let us try the tune again," and once more the children whistled and sang the Shepherd's Midsummer music. Louder than before came the soft little clapping, and Hans and Buttercup

jumped down from the wall and looked about them. Then they saw where the noise came from and they clapped their own hands with delight.

A row of little green fairies sat upon the clover blooms! They looked so like cheerful, round clover leaves that if they had not clapped no one would have known they were there. But when the children saw them they stood up and opened their gauzy wings, and after that there was no mistaking them for anything but real fairies.

"Your music is charming," said one who seemed to be the leader, and he and his companions each made a low bow to Hans and Buttercup. "You must be the children our friend the flute-player told us about. He sent us to find you to show you—but sh! we mustn't tell you yet." Then all the fairies put their fingers to their lips and nodded to each other.

"Before the sun sets," continued the spokesman, "you must gather a handful of fern seed in the forest. Then take your places beside the fairy spring, holding the

fern seed closely in your hands, and make no noise. We will be there, and because you are the flute-player's friends, you shall see what no mortal children in this country have ever seen before." Then the fairies turned little somersaults and vanished, and the children, jumping with excitement, drove the cows home.

When supper was over their mother told them to run out and play before the sun set. They had been good children, she said, and deserved a holiday, and as she and their father were going to a neighbour's to a Midsummer Night's party they would not see them again before morning.

Off ran the children to the woods. There, while the sun grew low, they gathered handfuls of fern seed, and they had just time to reach the fairy spring before the glow of sunset deepened and the sun sank below the horizon.

Hans and Buttercup sat upon a fallen log beside the spring; in front of them the ground was carpeted with soft, thick moss, and over their heads the boughs of the trees interlaced,

making the place dark and shadowy. And it was so still! The children listened to sounds which are never heard when the ordinary noises of the forest conceal them. There was the ripple of streams running underground, the faint tinkle of flower bells, the growing of trees, the stretching of bark and the waving of grass blades. They heard a spider spinning its web, the soft unfolding of evening primroses, and even the tiny stars which soon blossomed in the sky seemed to shine to a faint, far-off melody.

The children had been gazing up in the sky, listening, and when they glanced back at the green moss they found it was alive with tiny gray fairies, each bearing a red partridge berry for a lantern. The lanterns glowed as if filled with lighted candles, and their bearers flew over the moss placing lanterns beneath the mushrooms, and hanging them upon the blades of grass.

Oh, it was so pretty! Each fairy stationed himself near his lantern to guard it and keep it bright, and as soon as the moss was clear, another band of fairies arrived. They were

little lady fairies dressed in dandelion clock gowns and carrying wands with fireflies upon the tip. They too seated themselves around the moss, holding their wands in front of them as if they were tall lighted tapers with which to illumine a ballroom.

Then the children's friends, the clover fairies, came tumbling in, bearing between them two great red mushrooms which they placed at one end of the moss, and a small white toadstool which they put in front of it.

"The thrones for the King and Queen of the forest," they whispered to the children as they passed, "and the toadstool is for their eldest daughter. The Princess is to choose a husband to-night and you will see it all."

Off they flew and returned carrying two wonderful glowworms who had consented to come for the evening and shed their golden green light upon the royal party.

Then all was ready. The gray fairies stood on guard by their red lanterns, the firefly maidens held their wands straight and brilliant in front of them, and the clover fairies,

standing behind the thrones, looked as solemn as their round, merry faces would allow.

Again the wood was silent and yet full of the same mysterious growing and unfolding, rippling and spinning, which the children had heard before.

Suddenly over their heads, between the overarching boughs, they caught sight of the full moon. It seemed to be a signal, for in a second the moss was covered with dainty fairies wearing flower blossom robes and rainbow wings. Some sprang from the drops of the bubbling spring, others jumped from the trees, and many fell from the now wide open primrose cups. When they had all found places beneath mushrooms or in rows around the moss, the royal party came marching in. Their wings were folded, for on state occasions they think walking more dignified than flying, so they marched slowly while all the gentleman fairies took off their caps and all the ladies made low courtesies.

First came the King and Queen, the King dressed in red rose petals, the Queen in a golden lily, both wearing firefly crowns. Be-

hind them came the eldest Princess ; her gown was of woven thistledown, her crown of dew-drops, and her golden hair fell around her like a mantle. Behind her marched the royal children, two by two, dressed in blue and white violet petals which looked like clean smocks, and last of all came a chestnut burr cradle borne by two green beetles. It was surrounded by lady birds, for within it lay the royal baby, sleeping sweetly beneath milk-weed blankets.

When the King, Queen and Princess had taken their places upon the thrones, and all the rest of the royal family were seated beneath the mushrooms, the King stood up. In a small, shrill voice he announced that the Princess would, that Midsummer night, choose one of the three princes who had come from distant fields and woods to seek her in marriage. She had agreed to wed any one of the three who could bring her such pleasure that she could not help but dance for joy. There was a ripple of excitement among the fairy company and the King continued, " Let the first princely suitor appear ! "

Through the woods came what looked like a narrow stream of gold, winding in and out until it reached the moss. Then the children saw that it was really a procession of fairies in golden suits with yellow hair hanging over their bright eyes and heavy boxes of pure gold upon their shoulders. Before them marched their leader, Prince Dandelion, wearing a whole dandelion blossom for a crown. He and his attendants lived in the plants whose name they bore, and while the flowers were in bloom they carried away and packed up much gold from the petals.

The Prince marched up to the toadstool on which the Princess was sitting, shook the yellow hair out of his eyes, bowed low, and waved a hand at his attendants.

"See what I bring you," he said, and his followers turned somersaults to shake the hair out of their eyes, before they bowed also, and opened their golden boxes.

The fairies laughed with delight and amusement while the funny little golden men threw the gold from the boxes in all directions, turning somersaults every few minutes

to shake their yellow hair aside, that they might see to throw without hurting any one. The Princess laughed also.

"You have indeed a golden following," she said, "and they make me laugh with amusement, but still, kind Prince, I do not dance."

Prince Dandelion bowed sadly and seemed to be wiping away a tear as he stepped aside. But the children soon saw him laughing and joking with a firefly fairy. He was such a merry little fellow he could not long keep from smiling.

As soon as the moss was cleared the King spoke again.

"The next suitor may be called," he said, and there was a tinkling of harebells through the woods as a signal for the second Prince to appear. There was no stream of approaching gold this time, only a spicy fragrance filled the air, and presently a young prince dressed in pale green and silver stepped upon the moss. Behind him came hundreds of silver and green attendants, each bearing a brown wooden box.

As the Prince bowed to the Princess the

boxes were opened and the delicious scent of sweet fern was sprinkled upon each watching fairy. It was so fresh and sweet, like the woods after rain, or a meadow at sunrise, that the Princess sprang to her feet and kissed her hand to her suitor. The other fairies did the same, waving their spider-web handkerchiefs which were scented with the spicy gift.

"I kiss my hand to you in gratitude, Prince of the Sweet Fern," said the dainty little Princess, "but still I do not dance."

The Prince moved away sorrowfully and even the efforts of a rainbow-gowned water fairy did not seem to console him.

"Let the third Prince be called," commanded the King, and again the flower bells echoed softly through the woods.

There was neither a stream of gold nor a wave of fragrance this time. There was not even a prince followed by a train of present-bearing attendants. Instead a simple little fairy gentleman wrapped in a dark green mantle stepped upon the moss and approached the Princess. As he bowed before her the King cried:

"How dare you approach the throne without attendants and without a gift?"

The stranger did not answer. Instead he drew a golden honeysuckle flute from beneath his green mantle and raising it to his lips played a little melody.

Hans and Buttercup gazed at each other in astonishment, for he was playing the Shepherd's Midsummer music! Slowly the fairies swayed in time to the tune, then they waved their tiny arms and tapped with their wee feet. But the Princess flew down from her toadstool, and floating to the centre of the moss she lifted daintily her trailing thistledown robes, and danced and danced, until even the moonbeams did not seem as light and merry, as graceful and bewitching as she was.

On and on played the stranger until every fairy in the mossy spot was dancing also. Even the King and Queen sprang from their thrones and danced, while the baby rocked itself in time in its cradle and the lady birds and beetles had a quadrille!

At last the music stopped and the fairies

fell back on the soft moss, exhausted and blissful.

"Who are you?" panted the King. "You shall have my daughter and welcome whoever you are. Never have we heard such music."

Then the stranger put on his golden crown, which he had hidden in his pocket, and throwing back his mantle he stood dressed in silver and gold, with only his dark green cloak to remind one of his former costume.

"I am Prince Honeysuckle," he said, and he played a soft call upon his flute. In answer the forest became full of honeysuckle fairies, each bearing a flute, and also golden boxes full of clear, fragrant honey, their Prince's offering to the Princess.

So Prince Honeysuckle and the Forest Princess were married at once by drinking together from the fairy spring, and all the fairies had honey for the wedding feast, which they ate while the honeysuckle attendants played such merry tunes that the watching children longed to jump up and dance themselves.

Suddenly twelve bells rang through the woods, and the fairies rose in the air, the newly-wed Prince and Princess hand in hand, and away they all flew, north, south, east and west, into the trees and flowers, up towards the moonbeams and off through the woods.

The children were left alone while the fragrance of sweet fern lingered in the air and through the stillness they heard echoes of Prince Honeysuckle's flute.

But was it the honeysuckle flute they heard? It was playing the Midsummer music and it sounded like—yes, it was their own dear Shepherd!

His warm cloak was around them, they each slipped a hand into one of his, and then they were off, dancing as merrily as the fairies, through the woods and over the meadows, never getting out of breath or taking a false step.

It was such fun, such splendid, gorgeous fun, that the children sighed when they saw their home before them in the moonlight.

"Quick, look!" said the Shepherd, and

he pointed to the honeysuckle vine covering their porch.

Into every blossom a fairy was flying, their flutes hidden beneath their cloaks which were drawn tightly around them, and into the most fragrant clump of bloom flew the Honeysuckle Prince, his golden crown gleaming in the moonlight, while beside him, her hand in his, flew that Forest Princess.

The children gave a gasp of wonder and delight.

"With us," they cried, "they will live with us."

Then up the stairs they danced and into their beds and as they fell asleep they heard the faint sweet echoes of the Shepherd's flute as he disappeared up the hillside, still playing the music of the Midsummer Night's Dance.

XV

KING MOCKING BIRD

THERE was once a country which was ruled over by a young King whose greatest pleasure was to mimic people. He would watch an affected young lady come mincing into the room, and as soon as her back was turned he would copy her so cleverly, tripping along the floor, smiling and smirking, and pretending to flutter a big fan, that the whole court would be doubled up with laughter. He could mimic a learned counsellor just as well, talking in a deep, preachy tone, looking severely over the top of his spectacles, and pursing up his lips at the end of each sentence. He even imitated his grandmother, pretending to knit while he sat in the chimney corner and told the court, in the very tone and words they had heard the old lady use to him, that he was such a foolish lad, he had no business to rule over the country.

Whenever royal visitors came to stay with this mimicking King he made their lives miserable. However kind and attractive they might be, he always found something a little peculiar about them, a manner of walking, or speaking, or laughing, which he imitated as soon as they were out of hearing. Then when the court saw the visitor do that same thing again they smiled at one another and the poor guest was puzzled and uncomfortable.

It was not very polite, was it?

But the court lords and ladies enjoyed it extremely, until after a time the King began to imitate them. Then they were as unhappy as the visitors had been. If the rest of the court laughed when the King mimicked the voice or manner of one of their companions, they knew that the next moment he would be imitating the very way one of them laughed at his joke. And he didn't always wait until they were out of hearing either; he began to find it more amusing to copy a poor embarrassed lord or lady while they were in sight and he could see their cheeks

grow crimson and the tears rise to their eyes.

The King had a young brother who was away at school during the first years of his reign, but after a time the Prince came back eager to see the brother who had in his absence become a king. The young Prince was called "Merrythought," and he looked just like his name, for he was the jolliest, happiest lad in the world. As soon as the courtiers saw him they loved him, and not only the courtiers but the soldiers and the people adored him also. The King had ridiculed the way in which the soldiers marched, saluted, and presented arms, until the whole army was so embarrassed that when they saw the King coming they would all trip over their swords, knock their hats off, or drop their guns. Then the King was more amused than ever.

But when the soldiers saw Prince Merrythought come riding through their city gates he looked so gay and kind they saluted and presented arms as skillfully as if they were the best trained army in the world. And

when he bowed and smiled back a murmur of "If only he were our King!" passed through the ranks.

It was the same with the people. They had seen the King mimic their way of cheering, of offering their goods for sale, and of simply walking along the streets, until they wanted to run and hide when they saw him coming. But when they saw Prince Merrythought the men cheered, the women threw flowers beneath his horse's feet and even the children kissed their hands and cried, "Hurrah!"

The courtiers beamed with delight as they escorted the Prince to the royal apartments, and the Prince himself, expecting a warm welcome from his royal brother, walked into the audience chamber with hands outstretched and a merry smile upon his lips. But the King merely rose from his throne, and instead of coming to meet his brother, he imitated the other's bright smile and outstretched hands so mockingly that for a moment the Prince looked bewildered. But only for a moment; then Merrythought re-

When they saw Prince Merrythought, even the children kissed their hands and cried, "Hurrah!"

covered from his surprise and approached the throne gravely, bowing with great dignity. The King was astonished; not only had his brother shown no embarrassment but the courtiers had not even smiled at his joke. That made him angry and all evening he mimicked the lords and ladies, the soldiers on guard, and the servants in waiting, more unmercifully than ever before.

Prince Merrythought left the company early and went to the tiny tower room where he had slept as a boy. It was so far from the rest of the castle that he did not hear the sounds of rioting which broke out below him, and not until morning did he learn of what had happened.

For the people, the soldiers, and the courtiers rebelled against their mocking, sneering King. One glance at Prince Merrythought had shown them what a king might be like, and when their sovereign treated his brother in the same scornful way in which he treated them, they could stand it no longer.

Bearing lighted torches the people crowded around the castle demanding the King;

"King Mocking Bird," they called him jeeringly. With drawn swords the soldiers ran through the palace, and the courtiers searched every corner of the royal apartments. But the King had gone!

When the first sounds of revolt reached his ears he threw a dark cloak about him and fled down a secret stairway, out of the castle and into the neighbouring forest. By the time the people realized he had gone he was miles and miles away, and although Prince Merrythought had the country searched for days no trace of King Mocking Bird could be found. Not until then would the Prince consent to be crowned King, vowing that if his brother should ever return, he would at once give up the throne to its rightful owner.

But the people's response was only, "Long live King Merrythought!" while the bands played, the banners waved, the soldiers marched, and lovely ladies curtseyed low before the gracious Prince.

But where was King Mocking Bird?

He had travelled beyond the forest to the courts of the different kings whom he had

once considered his friends. While they knew and feared him as a powerful monarch, they had kept on friendly terms with the man who mimicked them, but when they saw him punished as he deserved they shut their doors in his face.

The King was much surprised. He had thought it would be an honour for any king to receive him and lend him an army to put down the revolt. "For am I not, with my power of mimicking, the most amusing fellow in the world?" he thought.

But at last, refused by every one, driven forth indeed by some, hungry, ragged and puzzled, King Mocking Bird wandered through a deep forest, and reached, as night fell, a tiny cottage.

Lights shone cheerfully through the windows, smoke rose from the chimney, and when he knocked at the door it was opened by the most beautiful maiden he had ever seen. She was indeed so radiantly beautiful that he stepped back amazed, wondering if she were a fairy or a wood nymph. Her eyes were like blue violets and her skin was

like cherry blossoms. Her golden hair was as bright as dazzling sunshine, her green gown was of as many shades as the woods in spring time, and her voice, when she spoke, was as clear and silvery as a mountain stream. But that was not all! Around her head, perched upon her shoulders, and following her footsteps were birds of every kind and colour. It was no wonder the King imagined her a forest fairy.

"Enter, my friend," she said. "My grandmother told me you were coming and your supper is ready. She is out cutting balsam boughs for your bed."

The King was so delighted with her welcome that he hated to tell her he was not the expected guest, for fear that she, like all the others, would turn him away. But when he told her he was only a poor friendless traveller, Spring Maid, for that was the maiden's name, smiled even more kindly. She did not like to tell him that her grandmother had told her she would know their visitor because he looked as a mocking bird would, if he copied only harsh and ugly sounds.

The fact was that this lovely maiden's grandmother was the fairy who has charge of the forests. When she watered her garden of wild flowers she was really showering the wild flowers all over the country. When she whispered to the trees that it was time to wake up, and sang mysterious songs which made the sap run and the buds swell, the trees in all the forests heard her and obeyed her magic. She had taught her grandchild while she was still a baby how to call the birds to her, and when the girl sang like an oriole, not only did the orange and black birds near her home answer her, but millions of other orioles in fields and forests far and wide replied also with their sweet song.

Every morning at sunrise she called the birds, and one after another they answered, until all over the country the birds were awake, singing with Spring Maid their morning hymn to the sun.

After supper King Mocking Bird heard her sing her good-night song to the birds in their nests, and through the twilight they

answered in sleepy notes until all the forests were quiet for the night.

Then the grandmother came home, bearing her bundle of balsam boughs. The cottage was filled with their fragrance. "But is it only the branches which bring that spicy odour?" thought the King.

The old lady's gray green mantle was full of it, and her shining silver hair and soft white hands seemed, as she bent over the weary King, to be fragrant also with the odour of forest trees.

She seemed to know all about him, and for the first time in his life the King felt a little ashamed when she said, "You have the power of mimicking, and have been called King Mocking Bird, have you not? Ah, well, you shall soon use that power in a new way."

He did not understand what she meant, and the spicy fragrance made him too sleepy to ask. He was soon asleep upon the soft pine-needles and did not stir until Spring Maid's morning song with the birds awoke him.

After that the grandmother insisted upon his learning the same calls, and never had his power to imitate been used in such a beautiful way. It took him a long time before he could sing in the least like Spring Maid, and he never had the wonderful thrill which ran through all her music, and which made her call heard by the birds over the whole country.

Then the grandmother asked her guest if he could imitate other sounds, the squirrel's "chatter," the cricket's cheerful "chirp," the "whirr" of the startled tree-toad, and the other calls of the small wood animals.

King Mocking Bird found that though it took far more skill to mimic these sounds than to imitate any number of lords and ladies, it was more fun also, and he soon found that he could also copy, and so call to him, even the large animals, so that deer and foxes, wolves and sometimes even lions and bears followed him as affectionately as pet dogs. He did not do it in the sneering way which had hurt so many people's feelings; he had almost forgotten how to be

mean and selfish, for the kindness of Spring Maid and her fairy grandmother, the beauty of the green forest and the friendliness of the birds and animals had changed the cruel King into a courteous gentleman.

The grandmother watched him with interest. She saw that their guest had fallen deeply in love with Spring Maid, as she had meant he should. "But can he, after his selfish life," she asked herself, "love any one enough to perform the difficult task I am planning for him?" It was on account of that task that the fairy had used her magic to bring the King to the cottage. For the dear old forest grandmother was in trouble.

Spring Maid had another grandmother, an old witch who lived in a coal mine and who loved darkness and meanness as much as the forest fairy loved kindness and sunshine. She too had animals which followed her as the birds followed Spring Maid, bats and moles, ground-hogs and woodchucks, snakes and toads, animals which enjoy darkness and live underground. She had also a company of gigantic black cats which always

surrounded her. The old witch wanted Spring Maid to live with her, to clean up the coal mine, and to feed the animals. She and the forest fairy almost fought over the girl when she was nothing but a tiny golden-haired baby, and at last the witch had declared that as she hated babies the other grandmother could keep the child until she was eighteen years old, after that she must spend her life in the coal mine and learn to be useful.

At last when there were only a few months before Spring Maid's eighteenth birthday, the forest fairy visited the dark cavern and begged the ugly witch to give up her claim to their grandchild.

"If you keep her here beneath the ground she will fade away," cried the miserable fairy, "and that is not all. None of the birds in this country will sing a note if Spring Maid is taken from them."

"All the better," mumbled the witch; "birds are silly things. I would like to see my sweet little rats and snakes eat up every one in the world."

The fairy had expected an answer like that and was not discouraged. She had a plan by which, with the help of King Mocking Bird, she still hoped to keep her granddaughter.

"Spring Maid has never been parted from her birds," she said, "and will miss them terribly. May she bring just one pet with her?"

"Bring him and welcome," answered the witch, "but I warn you that if my pretty pussies catch him I shall eat him. Now do go, for the odour of your mantle stifles me."

So the forest grandmother hurried home happily, told her plan to the King and Spring Maid, and the next morning the lovely maiden started off for the coal mine, carrying upon her shoulder a mocking bird.

("Perhaps," said the mocking bird who perched upon the Shepherd's flute as he told this tale to the children, "perhaps some child can guess who Spring Maid's bird really was? Yes, he was the King whom the fairy had changed by a touch of her witch-hazel wand into a mocking bird.")

Through the dark passages of the mountain they wandered, until they reached the gloomy coal mine, lighted only by the eyes of the black cats, which shone through the darkness like green and yellow lanterns. Around the witch's throne toads hopped and snakes glided, and the rest of the cave was lined with dark underground animals, who rushed at Spring Maid as soon as she reached the entrance.

"Keep back," shrieked the witch to them. "My granddaughter cannot attend to you all at once. Here, missy," she muttered, turning to Spring Maid who stood silent, shivering with terror, "it is time you did some work with those useless white hands of yours. I have promised these moles that you would brush their coats, the rats that you would curl their tails, the snakes that you would polish their scales, and my pussies —he! he!—that they could have a fine game chasing your bird."

But the King had left Spring Maid's shoulder and was flying wildly from one part of the cave to another. In each spot

he imitated a different bird until it seemed as if the whole coal mine was as full of songsters as the trees in the forest. The cats chased wildly to and fro, the other animals watched with such interest that they forgot to trouble Spring Maid, and even the old witch was bewildered.

"After them!" she screamed, "catch the miserable birds; do not let me hear another note!"

But up and down flew the mocking bird, while notes of robins and orioles, larks and wrens echoed through the cave.

Then suddenly the King changed his voice. He "chirped" like a cricket in one corner, "chattered" like a squirrel in another, sang like a katydid beneath the throne and "kerchunked" like a frog from the ceiling.

The underground animals nearly turned inside out with excitement, as they ran round and round after the creatures they heard but could not see, and the witch shrieked with anger.

Then the King again changed his voice, and this time he bayed like a wolf, barked

like a fox, grunted like a bear and roared like an angry lion.

The snakes, toads and rats dove into holes in the earth squeaking with fear, the bats flew wildly, the cats climbed the walls and the old witch's yellow skin turned purple with rage and terror.

"Leave me," she howled to Spring Maid, "leave me forever and take your horrible animals with you before they devour us all!"

As she spoke the terrified cats clawed an opening through the top of the cavern and a stream of sunlight poured in. Down the sunbeams slid the forest fairy, her face beaming. She took Spring Maid's hand and together they climbed back up the golden stairway the beams made for them, the mocking bird flying before them.

As they reached the mountainside the top of the cave fell in and with one more hideous shriek the witch dove through the black bottom of the mine and was never heard of again!

So Spring Maid returned to the forest in time to sing good-night to the birds all over

the country. Of course she married the King at once, and as they heard that Prince Merrythought made a very good king his brother decided not to return to his old kingdom. He and his wife lived instead in the forest, loved and followed by birds and beasts, and visited often by the fairy grandmother. And as the birds all over the country replied to Spring Maid, so the little creatures and big animals in all the forests in the land soon answered the call of the King.

"And that," said the mocking bird, as he ended his story, "is more wonderful than ruling over any kingdom in the world."

XVI

THE CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS

ONE warm summer's day when the waves of the ocean were a pale sea green and their crests like foamy lace, a flock of sunbeam fairies flew over the breakers. Every child has seen the sparkle of a sunbeam fairy's gown, but very few have seen the fairies themselves. One of them sat upon the Shepherd's little finger as she told this tale to the children, so we know what they really look like; just bits of sunshine with merry, smiling faces and glittering gowns of cloth of gold. As the fairy told this story she jumped up occasionally and danced over the Shepherd's hand, for they are such merry little things they cannot stay still long.

On the summer's day when they flew over the waves, they were especially jolly and eager for adventures. They are generally rather afraid of the water and never rest upon

it long for fear of tarnishing their golden robes, but on this particular day they sparkled through the foam and splashed in the green waves with their tiny hands, daring each other to dive farther beneath the white crests. At last to show how brave they were each fairy seized a drop of clear water, and holding it carefully in his arms flew back up to the sky, laughing with glee.

Then a strange thing happened. From all the drops of water there arose a moisture which surrounded the fairies and they suddenly found themselves in a cloud, a cloud castle. At first they were startled for they could not escape, but when they found that they could fly from room to room and that the castle was large and airy, they were much amused. They were still bearing their drops of water, and one of the fairies, I think it was Twinkle, suggested that they should use them as mirrors and hang them around the walls of the largest room, which they could call the ballroom. That pleased the other fairies very much. "Let us play we

are human beings," they cried, "and prink and fuss before the mirrors, and then let us have a grand ball."

So all day long they flashed back and forth before the rain-drops, combing their curly golden locks and arranging their trains if they were lady fairies, or polishing their swords and practicing courtly bows if they were gentlemen.

At last evening came, and as the sun sank the walls of the cloud castle lost their snowy whiteness and grew dull and gray. But the sunbeam fairies within the cloud grew brighter and brighter until the golden light from their robes and wings made the ball-room more brilliant than if it had been lit by a thousand wax candles.

Lady Twinkle and Sir Sparkle stepped out upon the floor to lead the dance. It had been agreed that as they were copying human beings they should not fly or jump upon the walls or ceiling. With bright smiles but great dignity the little beams faced one another hand in hand, but then they stopped and looked around bewildered.

"How can we dance without music?" they asked. "Real people never do."

All the fairies looked puzzled, almost worried. Would their first grand, human ball be a failure, they wondered. But suddenly a sweet, sighing noise was heard. It was so faint at first that the sunbeams curled their wee hands around their ears and listened intently. Then it grew louder and clearer, and as it filled the great room the whole castle began to move gently. For the music was the song of the south wind, who blew the cloud before her as she sang for the fairies' ball.

The sunbeams were blissful. Up and down and around the room they danced, smiling at their reflection in the mirrors, stopping sometimes to arrange a stray curl as they had seen world ladies do, and then whirling back with fairy feet that never tired, and smiling faces that never grew cross, even if all the fairies could not dance with the sunbeams they loved the best.

At last, about midnight, it occurred to Twinkle and Sparkle that at the human balls a supper was always served. They ran

through all the rooms of the castle, lighting up the dark corners by opening their wings, but no food could they find. A drop of honey, a scrap of green leaf, or a bit of a flower petal generally made a meal for many sunbeams, but even if they had found such dainties in the cloud castle they would not have been satisfied. Who ever heard of leaves and flowers being served at real balls!

The wind had died down, the music had stopped, and the little fairies were waiting eagerly for the supper Twinkle and Sparkle had gone to discover. And those two fairies were as worried as it is possible for sunbeams to be without fading away entirely. At last Twinkle was so discouraged that she leaned back against the wall and closed her eyes, and Sparkle, thinking that his lady-love had fainted, broke off a bit of the cloud and forced it between her lips. At once she opened her eyes and all the twinkle had come back to them.

"Oh, that is delicious," she cried; "it is just an 'ice,' the very thing they eat at all the world parties."

So they broke off whole armfuls of the cool, delicate cloud and carried it into the ball-room, where the other fairies flocked around them and sipped their "ices" as daintily as if they had been lords and ladies eating with silver spoons.

The next evening the sun set in such a rosy glow that the colour tinted the whole cloud castle, and the fairies fluttered their wings and cried, "The sun is seeking us!" They ate pink ices that evening, and then they danced wildly, not to the sweet music of the south wind, for it was the north wind's turn to blow, and he puffed so roughly that they had hard work keeping upon their feet, while the cloud castle rocked and pitched like a ship at sea.

But they enjoyed it all; they thought everything that happened in their castle amusing, and the following evening when the cloud stopped suddenly and remained so silent and motionless that they knew the winds had left them, they spent the evening polishing their mirrors and gaily playing hide-and-seek through the many rooms.

As the sun rose the next morning the castle walls turned first violet, then pink, and then golden. The fairies knew they must be high up near the sun for its rays to pass through the walls so clearly, but they did not know that the cloud had caught upon a mountain peak and would rest there until some wind arose and blew it off.

Just as the walls turned to gold a song was heard outside ; it was even more beautiful than the wind's music, for it was the song of a skylark.

Up, up, up rose the notes, clear as the water drops, bright as the sunbeams. Nearer and nearer the cloud soared the bird until he was just beneath it, and then with a flutter of his wings he broke through the castle, and still singing, rose through it from bottom to top and on and on, up to the blue sky.

Then a little breeze arose and the cloud floated off the mountain. There was a hole in the roof now through which the sky could be seen and a hole in the centre of the floor through which the sunbeams peeped.

The ground below them looked dry and

forlorn, for no rain had fallen for many days. The corn fields were brown and withered, the flowers hung their heads, and the dusty leaves on the trees were too miserable to even rustle or whisper.

The sunbeams longed to help, but they knew that if they flew down to the poor earth their brightness would only make it hotter and dryer than it was before.

Then Twinkle and Sparkle called a meeting in the big ballroom where their mirrors shone more brightly than ever in the morning light.

"What the earth needs is rain," said Sparkle.

"We all know that," answered the other fairies; "if that is what you have called this meeting to tell us, we are going back to the peep-hole to enjoy ourselves."

"Wait a minute," cried Twinkle, and Sparkle continued, "Our cloud castle is made of the moisture the earth needs, and our mirrors are the very rain-drops which can save the lives of the poor plants. There is a whole garden below us planted in tiny seeds;

the lark was singing about it. He said that the seeds were dying of thirst in the dry earth, but if they were sprinkled with rain now they would grow into glorious flowers. Shall we give them our rain-drops?"

The sunbeam fairies looked very solemn; they loved their castle and thought their rain-drop mirrors the most precious things in the world. But they were kindly little fairies, and so there was a flutter of golden wings as each clasped a rain-drop in his arms and at a signal from Twinkle flew with it out of the peep-hole.

With a crash and a bang the cloud castle burst, making a clap of thunder, the sunbeam fairies sparkled to and fro, forming splendid flashes of lightning, and then, as they dropped their mirrors upon the parched ground, a delicious cool shower sank into the earth and every thirsty little seed sang, "Thank you, thank you!"

Such a wonderful garden grew there in time! It was as full of radiant colours as the rainbow which, the moment the shower fell, stretched across the sky. For the sun-

beam fairies shone behind the rain-drops, laughing and dancing with delight as they heard the voices of the seeds, and that is what makes a rainbow—the reflection of the smiling sunbeam fairies in the rain-drop mirrors.

XVII

THE HEART OF THE FOREST

LATE one afternoon the Shepherd led the children up the hillside to a deep, pine wood. Farther and farther into it they wandered and at each step the path grew darker. Patches of blue sky could be seen above the tree tops, but the light between the tree trunks was dim and gray, and the children might have been frightened if they had not always seen before them the Shepherd's fluttering cloak.

Suddenly three long sweet notes floated through the wood.

"Is it the music from the Shepherd's flute?" whispered the children.

But no, the flute hung at its owner's side, and as the notes came again it seemed as if they floated from the very heart of the forest. It was the kind of song the forest would sing at that twilight hour, if only it had a voice.

Then two brown wings, like great, brown

leaves, fluttered past the listening children, and again they heard the call of the wood-thrush. "Come to me," it seemed to say, "come to me," and as the thrush flew on into the depths of the forest, the Shepherd and the children followed it. Over the soft pine-needles they ran, beneath great, out-stretched branches, until, when it grew so dark that the children began to trip on roots and stones, glowworms lighted their path, and fireflies danced among the pine trees like lighted candles on a Christmas tree.

Sometimes they paused to listen for the thrush's song, and when its notes were silent the Shepherd lifted the flute to his lips and played a little pleading air, like a puzzled child begging to be shown the way. Then the thrush's deep, tender notes called back, "Come to me, come to me," and the children followed it.

Around a huge, black pine tree they ran and then stopped short with surprise. They found themselves in an open space where the trees were so high they seemed to touch the sky, and their branches spread out like a

soft gray mist as far up as the children could see.

Between them shone the stars and a little new moon, and from the tree tops, so far away, floated again the thrush's call.

"We are in the heart of the forest now," whispered the Shepherd, "and the wood-thrush is not calling to us; he is calling to all who live in the woods to meet and greet the new moon."

The children sat at the foot of a tree, cuddling close to the Shepherd, and his brown cloak stretched out and covered them all, keeping them as warm and cozy as if they had been tucked up in their beds at home. Only this was so much more fun!

They could keep awake, and watch, and listen, and more than that, they could smell also. For a perfume which made them think of early spring filled the air, and a flash of violets spread over the ground as the fragrant flowers came blossoming up at the thrush's call.

A stream of golden light rose beside them where the cowslips opened their bright eyes.

And soon the ground was carpeted with all the flowers you can think of which grow in the forest. Over them flew lovely things which looked like flying blossoms. Can you guess what they were? Butterflies, tiny white ones, big blue wings, and gorgeous scarlet and orange.

The thrush was still calling. In answer, gray squirrels ran swiftly over the branches, little chipmunks chattered softly as they hurried to the meeting, and then the birds came. They were all there, all the birds you have ever seen or heard in a forest, brown and yellow, blue and scarlet, big and little. They flew very quietly, and when they had settled upon the ground, the branches, and the tree tops, only a low chirp or the rustle of a wing showed they were there.

The children were surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of flowers and insects, birds and wood animals. But at the heart of the forest one sometimes feels as they do in a great church, like keeping very still, and so it seemed natural that for a time there was no sound.

But before the children had time to grow sleepy the thrush, perched upon the topmost branch of the highest tree, up in the clouds it seemed, called again. This time he seemed to sing, "Come to *us*. Come to *us*."

Slowly the branches of the trees in the centre rustled apart, and through the open space the children saw a patch of sky, some twinkling stars, and the lovely crescent of the little new moon. As her bright face shone down upon the forest's heart the fragrance of the flowers rose to greet her, the butterflies fluttered their lovely wings, the little animals ran up and down the branches to show their delight, and the birds,—oh, the birds sang songs so wonderful and so joyous that the children crept closer to the Shepherd and squeezed his hand with delight.

Then all the colour and fragrance and song seemed to drift back slowly and softly to its place on ground and bough and tree top; but still the moon shone on, and still the wood-thrush called, "Come to us!"

"What is he waiting for? Why is he

calling?" whispered the children. And while all the forest seemed to wait for an answer to the thrush's call the Shepherd rose, and standing in the centre of the glade he lifted his flute to his lips. The same strange little air that he always played to call the children floated out, and, as usual, they ran to him, clustering around him while he stood in the moonlight.

"It is you they are waiting for," he said to them, "all the flowers, the birds, the animals and the moon. The heart of the forest may be the most beautiful spot in the world, but the moon thinks it is a lonesome place without the sight of a child. She would rather shine into a bare room if her beams could reach a baby's cradle. Dance for her now, and sing, and the birds and flowers will join you."

So over the beds of flowers danced the children. The blossoms danced also, bowing their heads as the little feet skipped over them, raising them when they had passed. The squirrels' gray coats shone in the moonlight as they frisked, the little chipmunks

whirled gaily around on their hind legs, the butterflies circled high in the air, the birds fluttered around above the hilltops, and even the moon seemed to dance in the clear sky; all trying to imitate the joyous children.

Then they began to sing. Above the notes of the flute and the birds rose the children's clear voices.

What they sang they never could remember. It seemed as if the song just poured out of their lips because they could not help it,—a song about the colour and music and beauty of the world as they had seen it in the forest's heart.

How they reached home they never knew, either, although some of them said they had a faint remembrance of being lifted upon soft, brown wings and carried over the tree tops.

But always afterwards, even when they were grown up and far from home, when those children heard a thrush's call they smiled, for they knew what it meant. It is a call to the heart of the forest, and it is only a child or a flute-player who can answer, and find the way to that wonderful spot.

XVIII

THE CAVE OF THE WINDS

ONCE upon a time there was a giant named Blunderbore, who lived inside of a mountain. He was the meanest, horridest kind of a giant you can think of, always trying to frighten people, and laughing great roaring laughs when he succeeded. There were mines in the mountain where Blunderbore lived, iron and coal and gold mines, and on the mountainside there were many little homes where the miners and their families lived. Blunderbore spent much of his time trying to bother the miners. Sometimes he shook the mountain while they were working inside until rocks and lumps of earth fell and choked up the passageways, and it took hours and hours for the poor men to dig themselves out. The giant thought that was a fine joke.

At other times he put on his invisible cap

so that no one could see him, and raced up and down the mines, blowing out all the lanterns so that it was almost impossible for the men to find their way out in the darkness. But all of his spare hours he spent in making a volcano. The huts on the mountainside shook with his laughter when he sat inside, and thought about what fun it would be when flames and boiling lava came pouring out of the mountain destroying the mines and the homes, and probably burning every one to death. He was really a very horrid kind of a giant!

Opposite the mountain in which he lived there was another mountain, whose rocky sides were so steep and dangerous that no one, not even hateful Blunderbore, dared climb them. At the very top there was a great cave which was one of the homes of the four winds. They have a great many homes, so that when they are off on long journeys they can always stop when they are tired and find a comfortable place to sleep. But this cave was one of their favourite resting places. It was so big that there was room for all four

winds and their attending breezes to rest or play there, and high and dangerous enough to keep out chance visitors. For the winds do not want to meet giants, or animals, or people, when they are off on a holiday. They take off their invisible mantles then and appear in their own forms, and hardly any one except of course their best friends, the Sun and Moon and the Sea, really know what the winds look like. But on the mountain in which the giant lived, right opposite the cave of the winds, there lived a boy who sometimes saw the winds without their mantles, for he was their godchild. When they first visited him he was a baby lying asleep in his cradle, but the North Wind soon woke him up, rocking the cradle so roughly that if the mother had been there she would have been terribly frightened. But Claude—that was the name he had been christened that very day—only opened his eyes and crowed. That pleased the gruff North Wind, and he gave him an icicle to play with, saying, "My godson shall be strong and fearless; that is my gift for him."

The South Wind tiptoed in behind her brother, holding back her shiny green robes for fear the North Wind's snowy coat would injure the bright and fragrant flowers with which her gown was embroidered. She placed a red rose upon the baby's pillow, whispering as she kissed him, "My godchild shall love all that is beautiful."

After her came her other brother, East Wind, and South Wind flew away quickly when she found him so near. "You are filling the house with your damp mist," she cried. "You will surely give Claude the croup."

But East Wind's only answer was to blow a small shower of rain-drops over the cradle, saying, "You shall be clever, little godson, like your East Wind godfather, whom most folks blame for bad weather when he is taking care of their crops and their streams."

Last of all appeared West Wind. She came hurrying in, taking off her sky blue mantle as she entered, and her hair was still wet with sea spray.

"Such a lark as I have had," she cried,

"blowing a ship home across the ocean so fast that she arrived a week sooner than she was expected! The captain's wife and child are still dancing for joy upon the beach."

Then she glanced at the baby and her blue eyes grew very serious. "There are many dangers threatening the miners," she said, "for Giant Blunderbore is getting more cruel every year. We cannot hurt him, for he runs and hides inside the mountain whenever I merely try to slap his face with a sharp bit of wind, but if our godchild is as strong and clever and fearless as I suppose you have made him, he may some day destroy the power of that odious creature." Then she bent tenderly over the cradle. "I shall save my gift for you, little Claude," she said, "until you need it and can use it. In the meantime I shall be your best friend." She gave him a kiss and the merry smile returned to her eyes, so that the baby laughed back at her, clapping his hands and gurgling for joy.

Then the winds blew home to their cave across the ravine.

But as soon as they had gone the door

"I shall need you and your gift to help me build my volcano."

opened again and the giant entered bending almost double to get into the small room.

"So the winds think that they are your only guardians," he chuckled, screwing up his face into a smile which made him even more hideous than he was before. He touched Claude's cheek with his horny finger and the child gave a startled cry.

"I shall need you and your gifts to help me build my volcano," muttered Blunderbore, "so I shall give you the gift of cruelty. You shall become like me, that is the best promise of all." He grinned again and stole away while the terrified baby screamed so loudly that the mother came rushing in, fearing that her child had fallen out of his cradle and broken all his bones.

From that day Claude puzzled his parents very much. If it were a windy day when most people wanted to stay in the house and shut the windows, Claude would fuss and cry until his mother put his cradle out-of-doors so that it rocked in the wind. Then he would laugh and smile as if he were talking to some one unseen by the rest of

the world. And so he was! Whenever the winds were blowing they were visible to him, and whether it was cold North Wind, or sweet South Wind, or misty East Wind did not matter to him, he loved them all and thought each one beautiful. But his favourite godmother was West Wind, and he was her especial darling. Sometimes she played with him as if she were another child, at other times she sang him songs about the sea and rocked him to sleep even more tenderly than his mother. When she was blowing he was always so good and merry that his mother learned to know which direction the wind was from by watching her baby's face.

But there were many times, alas, when no winds were blowing, and then Giant Blunderbore would steal out of the mountain and come to visit his godchild. He always wore his invisible cap so that no one except Claude, to whom he had given the power to see him in spite of magic, knew that he was around. But others saw at once the difference in Claude!

He soon learnt not to be afraid of his giant godfather and to try whenever the monster was around to be as like him as he could. When he was learning to walk he delighted Blunderbore by catching flies and pulling off their wings, slapping his tiny baby sister or pulling the cat's tail.

As soon as one of the winds came blowing up the mountain the giant ran away, and Claude became so good that those godmothers and godfathers never dreamed of what was going on in their absence. When he was about ten years old they began to take him with them on their journeys. Sometimes he was gone for a whole day, but his mother did not worry. Perhaps she guessed that the winds were taking care of him, for he never went unless they were blowing hard and always came back so gay and rosy that she knew he had been in good company.

North Wind carried him on his back while he taught his breezes how to whirl the snowflakes about, freeze the ponds, and blow around the icebergs in the far north. When

Claude went with his blustering godfather his one wish was to become as strong and fearless as that wind. He tried to puff and blow also, and one day he begged North Wind to put him down upon an iceberg beside a polar bear to prove how fearless he had grown. The bear was angry at first, but he was so amused when the boy puffed out his small rosy cheeks and tried to blow the iceberg along as if he had been North Wind himself, that the great animal roared with laughter and they became very friendly. North Wind was pleased too; he threw Claude up over his snowy back and tore along with him over snow-covered fields and frozen lakes. Then suddenly he stopped in his mad flight and dropped to the earth, exclaiming, "Here is some work for me to do."

Claude looked around surprised. The fields in all directions were glittering with snow and ice and there was nothing to blow except a little vine which one of the cold breezes had torn from a pine tree, so that it lay upon the hard ground fluttering forlornly.

The boy was still more surprised when his powerful godfather began to blow as gently as if he had been South Wind. He told the little vine not to fear, he would take care of it all winter, and he blew soft snow and covered it up as comfortably as if it had been a child in a warm white bed. Then he flew on again, roaring and tearing as wildly as if he never did anything but blow down trees and break off icebergs.

Sometimes Claude went on beautiful journeys with South Wind. She would float along on her wide, bright wings, the boy seated upon a cloud beside her while she blew sweet perfumes and golden air down upon the world. He begged to help, so she gave him a basket which always kept full of sunshine and gay flowers, and he let them fall where he saw children playing.

East Wind allowed him to help also. He wrapped the boy in a waterproof cloud and gave him a watering pot which, like the basket, could never be empty. Then he put Claude in a pack basket upon his back and off they went over the country, the breezes

beside them bearing silver mists and gray fogs, heavy three-day rains and little showers.

Claude sprinkled all the gardens he had helped South Wind plant, and often begged his godfather not to send many storms there.

"Silly boy," East Wind would exclaim, "my storms are as precious as South Wind's sunshine."

But his greatest happiness was flying with West Wind. She wrapped him in her blue mantle and they flew together over the sea and the forests, while the waves sang joyful songs to his beautiful godmother, the trees waved their branches to her, and birds' notes filled the air. What she brought to them he did not know, not snow nor ice, flowers nor rain, as did her brother and sister, and yet the whole world looked lovelier after she had been out. There was a shine and a glimmer over everything which even the children caught, and they laughed and sang with West Wind as gaily as did the waves and the birds, the flowers and the stars.

But there were many hours while the winds rested in their cave, letting their little breezes

do odd bits of work for them, and those times Claude spent with the hateful giant. Blunderbore had grown very fond of the lad who admired him so tremendously, and they worked together over the volcanoes, or shook stones down upon the tired miners, or blew out the lights in the deep, dangerous caverns. Claude enjoyed it in a queer sort of way. He was proud of having the great giant for a friend, and did the mean, cruel things because Blunderbore told him to; but he always came home cross and unhappy, and if a wind came for him soon after he felt terribly ashamed.

West Wind came blowing up suddenly one day when Claude was helping the giant put out the lights in the diamond mine so that the men would fall and break their legs. When she found what her favourite godson was doing she was startled and horrified. She kept her mantle on so that they did not see her, and flew so quietly that they thought she was only a little breeze out for a run, and went on talking and working. So West Wind listened and discovered not only what

Claude did when the days were still, but the fact that Blunderbore had made himself the boy's godfather, and had given him a present which, unless she did something about it at once, would make all the winds' gifts useless.

That night, when the stars were shining brightly in the sky, West Wind came blowing softly through the door of Claude's home. "Do you want me, godmother?" he asked, waking up as soon as he heard her enter.

"Godson," she whispered, "it is time you had my christening gift for you. Here is a pair of magic spectacles which no one else can see. Put them on and they will make you see things, not as many people walking upon the earth see them, but as they are seen by the winds blowing over the world. Wear them often, especially when you are with the giant Blunderbore. He must fulfill his promise to make you like him; the winds have not the power to change that. So," she added to herself as she turned away, "we must try and change the giant." Then she was gone, but Claude heard her singing softly around the house until he fell asleep.

The next afternoon there was not a breath of wind blowing, and Claude climbed the mountain where he found the giant waiting for him.

"Hurry up!" roared Blunderbore. "I am going to roll all these rocks down into the valley below. They will crush the houses, and it will be great sport. Watch me now!" And he rolled one great boulder down as easily as if it had been a ninepin. "Did you ever see any one as strong and clever as I am?"

Claude was wearing his fairy spectacles, and for the first time Blunderbore's sport looked mean and stupid, and the giant did not seem like a very great person after all.

"My godfather, North Wind, plays with his icebergs as easily as you did with that rock," he answered, "and I think he is far more wonderful. Not only is he as strong as you are, but he can do things that you don't know anything about. I saw him cover up a little vine once as gently as if he had been its mother. You couldn't be gentle if you tried."

"Couldn't I though!" cried Blunderbore, angry that Claude thought any one as wonderful as he was. "Do you see that little white thing in the ravine yonder? It is a baby lamb that I pushed over. North Wind couldn't pick it up, but just watch me."

In three strides the giant was in the bottom of the ravine, and picking up the baby lamb with one hand he carried it back to the flock on the mountainside.

"Now," he exclaimed, sitting down again beside Claude, "you ought to say I am the cleverest person you ever heard of."

"You are not as clever as East Wind," said the boy. "He makes the grain grow all over the world, and my godmother, South Wind, makes the flowers bloom. You cannot do anything as useful or as beautiful as they can."

"Wait and see if I cannot," roared the giant, and he hurried down the mountain, as East Wind blew up it to carry Claude off for a trip upon a mist.

When Claude looked out of his window the next morning he was so surprised that

he thought he must be dreaming. Soon the doors of all the huts on the mountain were thrown open, and the miners and their families also gazed with astonishment at the sight which met their eyes.

During the night the giant had plowed up the rocky land, piled the stones neatly in stone walls and planted the fields with sprouting grain, which he had travelled for miles to find and dig up. But that was not all. Each house was surrounded with a little garden, and as South Wind's warm, golden breezes blew over them the air was filled with their fragrance.

The men cheered, the women laughed, and the children danced for joy. "Who has done all this?" they cried, but although Claude ran to the giant's home and tried to drag him out, he refused to move.

"I only did it to make you think me wonderful," he muttered, and Claude slipped his small hand into Blunderbore's great one, crying, "You are a dear, wonderful giant when you wish to be. I love your gardens and I am wondering whether you can also plow,

and plant grain and flowers on the other bare mountains I have seen this morning." For not only did the magic spectacles make the giant's cruel work look differently to Claude, but the whole country had a new look and he saw many rocky fields and forlorn gardens in the distance which he had never noticed before. Blunderbore had begun to enjoy this game; it was really more fun than being cruel, and soon, as he and Claude worked together, the whole countryside began to flourish like a garden.

The little breeze who was telling this story to the Shepherd paused here. "I cannot tell you much more," he added after a moment's thought. "With his magic spectacles Claude saw so many things which needed help in the world that when he grew up he and his parents left the mountains, and where they went or what they did I do not know. The giant went away also. One of North Wind's breezes says he saw him lifting a ship out of the ice in which she had stuck, and East Wind says that Blunderbore often helps him put out bad fires, especially volcanoes.

"I have never seen him since he left the mountain, but I saw Claude last night. He comes to the cave of the winds every year to visit his god parents, who send a breeze, or a mist, or a cloud down the mountain to bring him up to the cave. Last night West Wind sent me, so I know what happened. The winds all surrounded him and welcomed him, asking him what he was doing with their gifts.

"'What have you done with your strength and courage?' roared North Wind.

"'I have been a soldier and led men into fierce battle,' replied Claude.

"'What have you done with your clever brains?' cried East Wind.

"'I have written stories about the journeys I took with you,' answered Claude.

"'What have you done with your love of beauty?' murmured South Wind.

"'I have sung glad songs about winds and flowers and sunshine,' replied her godson.

"But West Wind did not ask about her gift. She smiled at him with her starry eyes and whispered, 'We taught the giant a les-

son, you and I, did we not? You do not need the magic spectacles any more; you will always see the world as the winds see it, a place which needs all your courage and thought and love. The giant does not need them either; he sees things as you do.

"'Here, little breeze,' she said, turning to me, 'carry these spectacles to one of the children who will hear this tale. Tell him they are a precious gift from West Wind, who will be the friend and godmother of every child who loves the sea and the sunshine, the stars and the four winds.'"

XIX

THE SQUIRREL'S SECRET

A SMALL gray squirrel once perched upon the Shepherd's shoulder, and after the children had given him nuts which he cracked and munched contentedly, he told them this story which his mother, who learned the tale from her grandmother, had told him.

Many years ago a family of squirrels lived in a huge hollow tree. It was such a big place that the baby squirrels were always getting lost inside of it, and at last their mother made their home in one of the hollow branches quite high up, and told her children she would punish them with a whisk from her tail if they ever ventured into the big room below. They crept into their branch home from the outside through a knot-hole, which they called the side door, and they often looked longingly at the front door, the

large opening close to the ground, and wondered when they would be able to go in that way and play tag and hide-and-seek in the great room inside.

One rainy day, however, when they were all curled up in the hollow branch, munching nuts and telling stories, they heard some one trying to get in through the front door. The squirrel family thought this tree belonged to them, even if it was too big for them, so they chattered angrily and peeked through the hole from the branch they lived in to the big room below. What they saw surprised them so much that they almost fell over into the first floor on their noses, and their mother had to pull them back by their tails. She scolded them while she did it, not only because she thought them naughty, but because she wanted to see through the hole herself. But when she had pulled them back and looked out she was so surprised herself that *she* fell down to the room below, plump upon her nose!

For the stranger who had made her way into the hollow tree was not a squirrel, or a

bird, or a woodchuck; she was a lovely young Princess!

When the fat squirrel came toppling down the Princess laughed and then helped the mother to her feet.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, and the squirrel was so surprised to find a human who could speak her language that she almost fell upon her nose again.

"How do you know our language? Who are you and what are you doing in our tree?" she chattered.

"I am Princess Sylvia," answered the girl gaily, "and when I was a baby my fairy godmother gave me the gift of speaking and understanding the language of birds and animals. Three days ago I ran away from the palace and my cruel stepmother, and lost my way in this forest. The first night I spent in a bear's den with a lot of baby cubs. The mother bear was very good to me; she fed me with honey and berries and asked me to live there. But it was pretty crowded with all those cubs, so I wandered on and spent last night in a fox's hole. They also wanted

me to make them a long visit, but I thought it would be more fun to have a house of my own and call upon the animals instead of living with any of them. So they told me of this tree; they said your family lived in a top branch but they were quite sure you would let me stay below."

"Could you gather nuts for us and keep an eye on the children when their father and I go to evening parties?" asked the Mother Squirrel. She couldn't help liking the little Princess, she was so pretty and her voice was so merry.

"Are those your babies now?" asked Sylvia, looking up at the hole in the branch, through which stuck the heads of all the curious little squirrels. They were leaning way over to see what was happening, and as their mother was not behind to pull them back by their tails, they tumbled at that very moment, head over heels, into Sylvia's lap. They lay there squeaking with fear of their mother's punishment, but Sylvia patted them and begged Mother Squirrel to forgive them. "They are such sweet little things," she said.

That won the plump squirrel's heart at once and she showed the Princess where the softest pine-needles for her bed could be found, the sweetest berries for her supper and the nearest brook for drinking and bathing.

Then Sylvia curled up in her royal mantle and went to sleep happily, while through the opening to the tree the stars twinkled merrily at her and the brook sang her its sweetest lullaby.

The next morning the whole squirrel family escorted the Princess around the forest, introducing her to all their friends. Father Squirrel ran ahead, knocking on the trees or chattering below them to show the chipmunks and birds and rabbits that he had come to call. Plump Mother Squirrel hopped slowly beside Sylvia and the little ones frisked around them.

The creatures were delighted with the Princess. It was such fun to meet a girl who could understand and talk their language, and soon after they called upon her in the hollow tree, each bringing a present to make her home comfortable. The birds brought

soft down and feathers to line it with, the rabbits brought her fresh watercress and wood sorrel, the fox with whom she had spent the night carried her a soft fur rug, and the bear cubs kept her supplied with berries and honey. Not only did the birds and animals love and help the merry little Princess, but the insects befriended her also. An old spider whose web in the corner of the tree Sylvia would not break, became so devoted to her that he and his family wove soft gowns from gone-to-seed dandelions for her to wear, and spun her delicate sheets out of thistledown.

All summer Sylvia was blissfully happy. She was busy in the daytime with her forest friends, especially the squirrels, helping take care of the babies, playing with them or going on long journeys through the woods. But as soon as the shadows began to lengthen she hurried to an open glade among the trees. There the birds met for their evening concert and soon Sylvia could sing with them so well, that when her voice rose with theirs it sounded as if another bird had joined them.

After the music was over, and the lullabies were sung to all the sleepy little birds in their nests, Sylvia danced with the fireflies or the moonbeams. The full moon watched her one night, and was so delighted with the pretty dance that she had a wonderful dress of moonbeams woven and sent to the Princess. It was almost too exquisite to wear, Sylvia thought, but she put it on and danced and sang bird songs more beautifully than ever to show her gratitude to the rising moon.

Strangely enough a young King lost his way in the forest that very night and wandering among the dark trees chanced to stumble upon the very glade where Sylvia met the birds and the moonbeams.

There she stood in her shimmering gown, her golden hair wreathed with flowers, swaying slightly as if she were listening for some far-off music,—perhaps it was the running brook or the murmuring trees,—and when it reached her ears she began to dance. The moonbeams sparkled around her head, the fireflies twinkled about her feet, six little

squirrels sat in a row in the moonlight clapping their wee paws and waving their tails in perfect time, while all the wood birds and insects seemed to be watching and listening in the darkness which surrounded the open glade.

The Prince gazed on the scene with delight; he had never even dreamed of anything so beautiful. He was a great student and spent his time poring over musty volumes, writing some himself occasionally, although they were generally so full of long words that no one except himself could understand them. His castle was far from any forest, and he never took time to notice a flower or a bird's song. He had been on a journey in search of a rare book which he could not find, when he became separated from his attendants and lost his way, but when he saw Sylvia he forgot his disappointment and wished he could stand there forever watching her dance in the moonlight.

Soon, however, she turned to go home, the squirrels hopping and frisking around her,

and then the student King stepped forward and making a low bow, said:

"Are you a fairy Princess, and may I see you safely home to your palace?"

Sylvia laughed gaily. "I was a princess once," she said, "but now I am a forest maiden which is much more fun; and the squirrels will take me home, thank you."

"But may I come again?" asked the King.

"I should be glad to see you," replied Sylvia, "if you will be sure not to carry a gun or make a noise, which would frighten my forest friends. And now, as I know you would never have found this spot if you had not lost your way, will you let one of my best friends take you home?"

She called a frisking squirrel to her, and whispered something in his ear, to which the little creature chattered an answer.

"He says that he knows where you live, in a gloomy castle across the mountains, and he will take you there at once," said Sylvia, and as the tiny animal was already hopping down the path the King had to follow him, hat in hand.

After that he came to the open glade every afternoon at sundown, and found Sylvia waiting for him, as lovely he thought in the soft gowns the spiders wove for her as in the shining, moonbeam robe. Her eyes were like the brown pools in the mountain streams, her hair pure sunshine, and her mouth the merriest you can imagine. She taught the King a great many things he had never heard of, about flowers and streams, birds and animals. She even taught him a little of the squirrels' language, and a few bird notes.

One moonlit evening, before he wandered back to his dreary castle, he asked the Princess to marry him.

"Do you love me as dearly as do my forest friends?" she answered. "Show me that you do, and I will marry you."

The King hurried home, and when the sun was setting the next evening there came a tramping of hoofs through the forest as he rode back, followed by his attendants, each bearing gifts of gold and silver cloth, satins of rainbow tints and creamy lace.

"I have brought the most costly raiment I

could find to show how great is my love for you," said the King. But Sylvia only shook her head and smiled.

"My robe of moonbeams is more beautiful than these," she said, "and the spider-woven gowns are dearer to me, for the spiders do their finest work to show their love."

So the attendants packed up the presents and rode away after the disappointed King.

But the next evening he came again, and this time his train of attendants was twice as large. They carried heavy chests, and when they put them down and opened them before the Princess it looked as if the sunset colours with which the sky was radiant had tumbled into the open boxes. For they were filled with precious jewels set in necklaces and bracelets, rings and brooches.

The King looked eagerly at Sylvia's face to see if she were satisfied, but she was hardly glancing at the gems.

"I am afraid you do not understand," she said. "These jewels are gorgeous, but the flowers which bloom through the forest to give joy are more precious in my sight. I

sing my sweetest songs and pick my most cherished blossoms to show my love for you, but I cannot marry you unless you learn the secret of loving which all the forest knows. Love me as the skylark loves the sun, the nightingale the moon, or," she added, patting the little squirrel who perched upon her shoulder, "as the Mother Squirrel loves her little ones."

The King went away much puzzled. He consulted his oldest books, volumes so heavy that it took four men to lift them, to learn all that they taught about skylarks and nightingales and squirrels. But in none of them was there any mention of the way to love.

Before sunrise the next morning he visited a meadow, where he was told there were many skylarks, and finding one of the brown birds, asked him, in the few bird notes Sylvia had taught him, to tell him how he showed his love for the sun.

The bird opened his wings, for the golden glow of the approaching sun filled the sky, and as it rose over the horizon the bird sprang into the air singing. His notes came

back to the listening King, clearer and sweeter and more joyful as he rose higher and higher until he was lost to sight.

"That was very lovely, but it does not help me much," exclaimed the King.

That evening he did not visit Sylvia's glade, although she waited there for him until the moon was high in the sky. Instead he went to the depths of the forest where Sylvia had told him a nightingale always sang.

"Tell me, little gray bird," he cried to the nightingale who was perched upon a branch in the darkness, "I beg of you, tell me how you love the moon."

Just then the full moon drifted clear of the tree tops and such an exquisite song poured from the bird's throat that the King almost understood its meaning; for the bird was singing with all its heart of its deep love. He almost understood, but not quite, and the next morning he visited Mother Squirrel.

Sylvia was out with the young ones, the squirrel said, and the student King was glad. "For I want to see you alone, Mother Squir-

rel," he said. "I want you to tell me a secret, which I believe is known to many in the forest. How do you love your baby squirrels?"

The plump little animal opened her bright eyes very wide at such a strange question. "I'm sure I don't know," she said. "By the way, talking of children reminds me that nuts are very scarce this year, and if the young ones are to keep fat and strong we mothers will have to give all we can find to our babies and live on dry roots ourselves."

She ran up to a hole in the tree and drew out a big walnut for one of her children who came frisking up at that moment, chattering, "I'm hungry, hungry, hungry!"

The King sprang to his feet. "You have told me your secret," he exclaimed; "at last I understand. You all, skylark, nightingale and Mother Squirrel, show your devotion by giving what you love the best. Please ask the Princess Sylvia to meet me at sunset in the glade and tell her that I have learned your secret."

The squirrel did not understand in the

least, but she gave Sylvia the message and the Princess wreathed her golden curls with harebells, put on her moonbeam robe, and looked so lovely that as she entered the glade the birds all fluttered around her head and the squirrels frisked proudly about her feet.

Then she stood still, gazing with wonder at what she saw. All afternoon the King and his attendants had been busy piling up wise and heavy books upon the grass. In many places they rose as high as the trees, a regular forest of learned volumes, and among them stood the King smiling happily.

"I have brought you all my books," he said, "my most precious possessions which I have spent my life in writing and collecting. They are strange gifts for a lovely lady, but they are, as are the notes of the skylark, the song of the nightingale and the gifts of the Mother Squirrels, what I love the best."

As the Princess came forward and gave him her hand a rustle was heard through the air, and there beside them stood Sylvia's

fairy godmother, (she was the forest fairy, Spring Maid's grandmother, of whom you may have heard before).

"For many years I have been watching and guarding you, my child," she said to Sylvia. "I taught you to love the forest, and after the King, your father, died and your stepmother became jealous of you, it was I who whispered in your ear to run away to the friends in the forest. Now that you have found the truest of them all you must leave the hollow tree and live in a castle, but I know you will make it bright with birds and flowers.

"I have brought you each a wedding gift," she added, touching them upon their breasts with her wand. "I give the King a love and a knowledge of birds and flowers, and I give you, my god daughter, a love and an understanding of the wisest of these books. Not the heavy ones with the long words," she laughed; "they had better stay here for the squirrels to play hide-and-seek among. And now you must come to my cottage and have a wedding

party. You will find the animals waiting for you."

So Sylvia and the King followed her through the forest hand in hand, while the squirrels frisked before them, the moon rose over their heads, and in a distant tree a nightingale poured forth the meaning of the squirrel's secret.

XX

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW

"WHERE did you get your magic flute, dear Shepherd? Do tell us!" begged the children, and in answer the Shepherd told this tale.

A shepherd boy once sat alone upon a hillside. We had a story about him before, when he was a discontented prince until he found that the fairy folk were his relatives and the White Heather Queen his godmother. His father died soon after and one of the older sons became king. Then the Fairy Queen's godson left the palace and lived out on the hillside, tending a flock of sheep and telling tales to the children of the village.

But after a few years he had told all the stories he knew, and this day when he was sitting alone up on the hillside he was wishing that he could understand the language of birds and winds and flowers, so that he

could learn new and wonderful tales from them. At that moment the west wind, which was blowing through the grass until it waved and bowed before her, seemed to be singing a song, a song which told a beautiful story. The brook babbled noisily down the hillside, making a great fuss as it splashed over big stones, rippling softly as it reached quiet pools, and the shepherd lad longed to know what it was talking about. Then the bees buzzed over the heather blossoms, the crickets chirped in the grass, a rabbit jumped over a bed of fern, and overhead a robin sang joyously. "If only I could understand their language, what splendid stories they would tell me!" sighed the boy.

"Hum, hum, hum," sounded the wings of a brilliant little humming-bird as it flew down upon the heather beside him, its many coloured feathers glistening in the sunshine like a tiny bit of rainbow. Then it opened its long slender beak and said in words which were perfectly clear to the boy, "I have been sent to you by my friend the White Heather Queen. She knows of your wish to under-

stand the language of birds and brooks, winds, flowers and stars, and she wishes me to tell you that there is only one way to learn. You cannot expect them to tell you their best stories if you give them nothing in return. You must have the magic charm which will draw them to you and make them love you, so that they will be willing to tell you their precious secrets. Somewhere that charm is waiting for you; decide where you wish to seek it and my fairy wings will carry you there."

The lad thought a moment.

"All the trees and flowers spring from the ground," he said; "the streams run close to it and the birds build their nests near it. Surely this magic charm must be in the heart of the earth. I would like to go there, but how can your delicate wings bear me?"

The humming-bird flew to the boy's cap and rested there.

"Close your eyes," he said.

The boy did so, and, "hum—hum—hum," went the wings, while the Shepherd felt the delicious sensation of rising and swooping

through the air as though wings as strong as a great eagle's were bearing him aloft. Then suddenly he sank down, down, down, until they had reached the centre of the earth.

When the lad's feet rested upon a rock he opened his eyes and found that he was standing in a huge cave, so brilliantly lighted with blazing fires that at first he had to shade his eyes. Soon, however, he became used to the glare and could see that beside each tongue of flame there stood a little fire goblin, dressed in red and yellow, jumping up and down so swiftly that he looked almost exactly like the flames which he guarded.

At the end of the cave where the young Shepherd stood the flames and the goblins were about the size of the fires on small hearths, but down the sides of the cavern they grew larger, both flames and goblins, until at the farther end where the King and Queen sat, they were as gigantic and terrifying as the flames of a volcano. It was all very gorgeous, but it was frightening too, and the lad looked around for his companion. The wee humming-bird had perched upon a

bit of rock beside him and was whirring its rainbow wings to keep up its courage.

"What do you wish?" snapped the little goblin flames around the Shepherd. "What do you wish?" crackled the larger flames around the room, and "What do you wish?" roared the great goblins at the end of the cave.

The lad stepped forward bravely and bowed before the dazzling King and Queen of the Heart of the Earth.

"I am seeking the magic charm which will make me able to understand the language of woods and fields," he said politely. "Can I find it here?"

"No," roared the goblin King in as gentle a roar as it is possible for a fiery furnace to have. "But you are a courageous lad to have ventured here, and we will help you in your quest if in three guesses you can tell us what we fire goblins, sovereigns of the heart of the world, love the most."

The answer to that question seemed very simple to the young Shepherd and he answered at once, "Why, fire, of course."

"Wrong," roared the King, and all the other goblins blazed and snapped and crackled, "Wrong. Wrong."

The lad looked again around the great cavern full of red and yellow flames. The black walls and roof were illumined by the gorgeous colours which streamed in every direction like triumphant banners.

"Then you love best your colours of gold and crimson," he said.

But again the King roared "Wrong," and this time the other goblins echoed it so angrily that their flames sprang forward, and the Shepherd wondered if they meant to set him on fire.

"Back!" hissed their King. "We must not destroy him, for he has one more chance. Shut him up in the dark cell and let him think of his last answer until the morning."

Two goblins led the boy to a cell opening out of the great hall, in front of which they rolled a huge rock so that their prisoner was in total darkness.

"Cheep, cheep," sounded from his pocket where the poor little humming-bird had hid-

den itself in terror, and the Shepherd helped it to flutter out.

"Don't be discouraged," it said, as soon as it had alighted comfortably upon his cap; "you have still the night before you. Say where you wish to go and I will take you there. Do you want to give up your quest and return to the hillside?"

"Never," answered the lad, and the bird hummed approvingly. "Carry me where I can watch these flame goblins and discover what they love the most."

So again they rose lightly in the air, and although the Shepherd never knew how they passed the rock at the entrance to the cell, they were soon at the opening of the underground cavern. Some goblins bearing their flames were just pouring out, quarrelling as they flew along.

"The King said we were to light the fires to cook 'It's' supper," said one goblin.

"But I have done that so often," answered a second. "I really think I might blaze up just once to make 'It' laugh."

"No, you can't," said a third; "we can-

not do that until we are the bravest, brightest flames in the Heart of the Earth."

Just at that moment the King himself came tearing along, roaring, "Hurry up all of you, or 'It's' supper will be late all over the world. I must be off to amuse 'It' while 'It' waits."

"Let us follow the King and see what they mean by 'It,'" whispered the Shepherd.

"Then close your eyes," hummed the bird, "for we must follow as swiftly as fire burns."

The lad closed them, and when he opened them—well, where do you suppose he was? Not in front of the great fireplace of a palace, or beside a blazing house, or a volcano. The King of the flames had taken the best piece of work for himself, the work which all the flame goblins in the centre of the earth longed for, and he was simply crackling and blazing on the hearth of a tiny cottage, making a small child smile and gurgle with glee.

"I have made 'It' laugh," sparkled the King. "'It' knows that the goblins bring their brightest colours and their gayest dancing flames just to please 'It.' That stupid

shepherd boy will never guess that what a flame goblin loves the best is the smile in the eyes of a child!"

The lad laughed softly to himself as he flew back to the dark cell, where he slept peacefully until the goblins arrived to summon him to the King.

With a low bow he faced the dancing flames and when the King roared, "Well, have you found an answer for me this morning?" he replied, "Can it be that what the flame goblins in the heart of the world love best is the smile in the eyes of a child?"

The little goblins were so surprised that they stopped jumping, while the larger ones forgot to crackle their flames and the King and Queen fell from their thrones in astonishment.

"But you are right," sparkled the Queen, as she picked herself up.

"You are a clever lad, worthy of finding the magic charm," roared the King, shooting up red and yellow flames which touched the roof of the cave, as he reseated himself. "The magic charm which you seek is not to

be found on or in the earth. Only this far can I help you."

"But that is a great help," cried the Shepherd. "If it is not on the earth it must be in the sky. Many thanks, your highness, for your kindness. Come, little bird, and help me fly beyond the clouds."

So up to the blue sky floated the boy, while the bright wings upon his cap hummed joyously, and there, seated upon a double throne, sat King Sun and Queen Cloud. In a half circle beyond the King stood a line of his golden attendants, each bearing a beaming round sun for a shield, and beyond the Queen circled her ladies, each veiled in a soft white cloud.

The King himself was so bright and sunny that the shepherd boy wondered why the Queen Cloud beside him did not fade away, but then he noticed how thick and misty was the veil with which she protected herself from his rays.

"What do you wish?" cried the cheerful King, and "What do you seek?" sighed the veiled Queen.

"I seek the magic charm which will help me to hear the secrets of birds and blossoms," answered the Shepherd. "Can I find it here?"

"We will tell you where to find it," laughed King Sun, "if you can tell us what we love best in the world. You may have three chances."

The boy looked around him and answered, "You love Sunshine best."

"Wrong," chuckled the King, and all his attendants beamed with amusement.

"Then Clouds," said the boy, and "Wrong," sighed all the veiled ladies with a little shiver.

"You can have until to-morrow morning to think of your third guess," said the Sun. "Show the visitor to the guest chamber," he added to his guards, and the Shepherd was led to a cloud chamber lined with golden hangings. It was a pretty place, but he saw nothing there which could help him solve the riddle.

"Carry me," he said, to the tiny bird who still perched upon his cap, "to some

place where the Sun and Clouds are at work."

The bird fluttered its wings and they were off to the entrance of the sky palace where the King and Queen were just floating out seated upon a sunset cloud. The boy overheard the Queen say, "All of our attendants are busy watering the earth or warming the seeds. Let us have a glimpse of the work we all love the best.'

The cloud dipped and floated down to the earth, and the boy and the bird followed. In a dell in a forest the cloud rested and the Shepherd reached the spot just in time to see a rosy child with a piece of bread in his hand run into the wood.

"Without my clouds and your beams the grain which made that loaf would never have ripened," whispered the Queen to her husband.

The child stopped at the little dell, ate his bread, his face full of dimpling smiles, and then looked around at the bed of dancing fern and gay flowers at his feet.

"They too are the result of our labours,"

murmured the Queen, as the child clapped his hands and laughed with delight.

The Sun King laughed also, even the Cloud Queen smiled through her veil as the King rubbed two sunbeams together to make the child laugh again, exclaiming, "Our visitor will never guess that what the sun and the clouds love the best is the laugh on the lips of a child."

The listening Shepherd laughed also, and the King turned around startled.

"So you are here!" he exclaimed, with a radiant smile, "and you have discovered our secret. Well, it may help you to find the magic charm, for your third trial will be the most difficult of all. The charm can be found only in the middle of the sea. Ask your fairy bird to carry you there and, as it will soon be dark, we will send our sunbeams to light you upon your journey."

The Shepherd thanked the King and off he darted with the enchanted wings fluttering upon his cap, over miles and miles of wide blue ocean, until, when the sunbeams left them and the moon rose in the sky, they

found themselves upon a rock in mid-ocean.

The rock was covered with lovely gleaming mermaids who caught the humming-bird and the shepherd boy, and would not let them go.

"We will bind you with seaweed and throw you into a cave at the bottom of the sea," they cried, "unless you can tell us, before the sun rises, a tale of what we love the best."

And so all night long, while the waves broke against the rock and the moon rose and sank, the Shepherd told the beautiful mermaids all the tales that he knew. But at the end of each one they cried, "No, no, that is a nice story, but it is not about what we love the best."

At last, a little before sunrise, when the stars were paling in the sky, the weary lad fell asleep, and while he slept he dreamed. He dreamt that he was a little child again, sitting upon the seashore. The wind ruffled his hair, the taste of the salt waves was upon his lips, and he was singing for joy. Suddenly in the dream, other voices joined his,

soft voices of mermaids, who swam around the rocks, splashing the sparkling water high in the air until it fell in rainbow colours around the child who held out his arms to them, crying, "I love you, dear dream ladies; I shall never forget you." Then he awoke, and lo and behold the sun was rising slowly over the great ocean!

"You have only a few moments left," cried the mermaids. "Shall we throw you in the cave with the devil crabs or can you tell us the tale we are longing to hear?"

So the Shepherd told them the story of his dream, and when it was finished the delighted mermaids dove back into the blue waves, crying, as they vanished beneath the foam, "At last, at last you know that dearer to us than anything under the sun are the dreams in the heart of a child. Look, dear Story-teller, there is the object of your quest, the magic charm."

There must have been a shower somewhere, although the sun was shining gloriously overhead, for right across the sky spread the splendid arch of a rainbow. Its foot rested

upon the rock and there, half-hidden in the radiant colours, lay a small dark object. It was the flute, the magic flute, with which from the moment the tiny humming-bird, itself a bit of the rainbow, left him that morning upon the hillside, to the day he told this tale, the Shepherd played to the birds and the streams, the winds, the flowers and the children. And in reply they followed and loved him, singing to him their sweetest songs and telling him their most wonderful tales.

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